

TRAVELING A HARD ROAD: PATHWAYS TO WOMANHOOD AMONG GENERATIONS OF POOR  
FEMALES OF HAITIAN DESCENT LIVING IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

BY

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## ABSTRACT

Messages disseminated by the international aid community, which disempower women in developing countries, advocate for delayed first pregnancy and motherhood until after the age of 20 (Barinas & Flores Chang, 2011). This advocacy contrasts starkly with the pathways to womanhood/an adult identity via marriage and motherhood among females of Haitian descent—marginalized women who live in bateyes, settings where their environmental cues (e.g. structural and direct violence) and family histories (relatively early morbidity and mortality) indicate to them that the benefits of adolescent motherhood might outweigh costs. Currently the disconnect between international advocacy and women’s lived choices in the bateyes is problematic because programs designed and funded by international organizations are less likely to support the women they are intended to help. However, little to no research exists that empirically investigates perceived best pathways to womanhood. This could help bridge the gap between international programming and resources with the needs and choices of marginalized women in the bateyes and similar developing contexts. My ethnographic research in the Dominican Republic aims to fill this gap in the literature on pathways to womanhood/an adult identity via early motherhood and serves as a first step in developing evidence-based salient programs and interventions in which marginalized young women can and will participate. Absent such research, it is nearly impossible to design and implement sustainable and salient interventions and programs for marginalized women living in bateyes and similar settings.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

My research on pathways to womanhood and early motherhood among females of Haitian descent began in 2002 when I first arrived in the bateyes. I initially became involved with bateyes Sonrisa and Chiquito while volunteering as an adult literacy facilitator with a local non-profit organization. In those early days I was not familiar enough with life in the bateyes, and perhaps not yet perceptive enough, to see the poor urban planning that went into the reconstruction of these homes and the community following Hurricane George in 1998. Multiple barracks had been built, each housing three families. Each home consisted of two rooms. There were no windows in any of the barracks, only two doors, one in the front room and one in the back room, which had to be shut for security every night, making sleeping conditions stifling. Government planners did not see fit to spend money on outfitting each home with a toilet and no space was afforded outside the barracks for individual families to build latrines. Instead, public latrines and washrooms were installed for multiple families to share. Because there was no accountability for cleanliness, these public bathrooms became unbearable to use rather quickly. The bateyes did not receive any public services or maintenance from the local municipal government no steps were taken to have the septic pits cleaned and make other repairs. A few community members eventually took it upon themselves to board-up and decommission the public latrines.

I initially entered bateyes Chiquito and Sonrisa working as an adult literacy facilitator, through a local non-profit organization that I volunteered with. Our literacy classes were held in a community center that was also built as part of the reconstruction after Hurricane George. It was a large one room building made out of thin plank wood painted powder blue. The roof was

made of corrugated tin and the floor was concrete cement. It was outfitted with one light bulb and one electrical outlet. Electricity was inconsistent in batey Sonrisa, as it was in most parts of the country in the early and mid-2000. Evening classes were often held using camping lanterns so participants could see. The community center was originally constructed by a local non-profit organization that no longer functioned when I began working in the bateyes. As a result, there was no structured ownership of the building. It was in relatively good condition when I began working in the bateyes in 2002. By the time I returned to do my fieldwork for my dissertation, in 2012, slates of wood were missing from the frame of the building, leaving gaping holes large enough for a cat or small dog to enter. The plastic chairs that our literacy participants sat on were all gone. Windows that previously had wooden shutters were now boarded up with corrugated tin and the interior of the community center was filthy. A community member in charge of caring for the building had appropriated it as a personal storage space for large burlap bags of charcoal that he sold to households in the batey. The charcoal left thick layers of smut throughout the entire building. No one confronted this man because technically no one had the authority to represent the community center. The physical and institutional state of the community center in batey Sonrisa was a fairly accurate representation of how local government failed to provide infrastructure and adequate governance to batey communities and how in their place non-profit organizations, including those I was affiliated with, between 2002 and 2008, enter and leave bateyes based on funding lines, often leaving communities without the lasting imprints of sustainable enterprise.

It was in this setting that I first met Alejandra. I was Alejandra's literacy facilitator in batey Sonrisa and she was a promising and dedicated learner. Alejandra participated in an adult literacy program that I was affiliated with at the time. Alejandra was not unlike many of the

single mothers I encountered in the bateyes. In her late 20's, she had three young children in her home, which consisted of one third of a cinderblock barrack, constructed by the government of Hipolito Mejilla, after Hurricane George devastated the community in 1998. Because her household did not have a latrine, Alejandra and her children were left in the difficult position of needing to visit the homes of family and very close friends, comadres and compadres, or people who were considered extended family through marriage and christening ceremonies, in order to use an outhouse or toilet during the day. While Alejandra and her children consistently had people who would allow them to use their latrines, such need was a continued source of embarrassment and discomfort, one that Alejandra spoke about on a few occasions when she borrowed my own bathroom. At night a bucket would serve as the family's toilet, to be dumped in a small patch of dirt not 10 feet from the family's barrack in the morning. Alejandra would always make sure to pour down some bleach to diminish the smell of human waste. Some of her neighbors were not so considerate. Alejandra and her children were not alone in their dilemma: 70% of homes in the bateyes did not have a latrine, and bateyes Sonrisa and Chiquita were no exceptions (Water Life Foundation, 2014). Back in 2002, Alejandra supported herself and her children working as a domestic servant for families in East Santo Domingo. During most of the early years when I knew her, between 2002 and 2006, Alejandra could find day jobs that at least allowed her to be with her children at night. However, they also required her to leave the batey early in the morning and return late in the evening. There were occasional periods when the only work Alejandra could find was "con dormida", or as a live in domestic where she was required to sleep at her employer's house five nights a week, only returning to the batey early on Saturday morning and then leaving again on Monday morning. During these periods her three children would stay with their biological father and his wife.

Alejandra had an ongoing affair with the father of her three youngest children. One of Alejandra's children was born in the same year as a half-sibling. The father of Alejandra's children did provide her with a nominal, but consistent amount of child support each month. In 2012-2013, he gave Alejandra \$1000RD per month, or the equivalent of one week's food costs for a very modest diet for four people.

Alejandra had never attended school as a child. Initially, I believed this to be the result from a lack of documentation. Like many people in the bateyes, Alejandra was Dominican by birth, but of Haitian descent. I later found out that the story behind her documentation was far more complicated than I originally understood and characterizes the ways in which structural violence are enacted in both the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Alejandra was actually born in Haiti but believes that she was brought to the Dominican Republic before her first birthday. Her mother died shortly after her birth of unknown causes. Alejandra never knew her father, was told nothing about him by the people who raised her and does not know if he is dead or alive. She was raised by a maternal aunt, has no memories of Haiti, nor has Alejandra gone back to Haiti since leaving as an infant. Alejandra described a childhood of abuse and neglect at the hands of her aunt and uncle in the Dominican Republic. They lived in a region in the north of the DR, called Cibao, working on coffee plantations. Alejandra was put to work by her aunt at an early age. By the time she was six years old Alejandra was expected to pick coffee beans that had fallen from trees alongside her aunt and uncle for 10-12 hours a day. By the time she was eight years old, Alejandra had to wake up at dawn to prepare tea and coffee for her aunt and uncle. She would then accompany them to the coffee fields for a full day's work. When she finished fieldwork at the end of the day, Alejandra generally had to go into the town with a basket of

maní (roasted peanuts) to sell on the streets of the community. She was afforded no time for school, play and had no friends.

When Alejandra was 10 or 11 years old a group of three sisters also working in the coffee fields took note of her. The head of these three sisters, Belkis, was 23 years old at the time. Belkis relayed to me that she and her sisters were horrified by the treatment that they witnessed Alejandra receiving at the hands of her aunt and uncle. Aside from having to work constantly from early morning, until late in the evening, Belkis described witnessing regular neglect and physical abuse of Alejandra. Her grueling work schedule did not allow Alejandra time to bath on a regular basis and her aunt did not tend to her hair (something that is considered a basic duty of a mother in Dominican and Haitian culture). Belkis described how she and her sisters took Alejandra aside to bath and wash her hair after seeing her in the fields for a couple of weeks. By the end of the harvest season Belkis and her sisters had witnessed sufficient maltreatment to take the rare step to privately ask Alejandra if she wanted to escape with them. Alejandra was 11 years old at the moment she agreed to abscond with Belkis, Tati and Fifi. After hiding in the house of a trusted confident of the sisters, Belkis successfully brought Alejandra to batey Sonrisa on the eastern periphery of Santo Domingo. Alejandra lived in Belkis' household for five years. She described it as a safe place, but always felt as an outsider "Ella no me mostro el cariño de una mama (she did not show me the warmth of a mother)." Belkis would spend months in Cibao working in the coffee harvest, leaving Alejandra with her mother and children. Alejandra was kicked out of the household by Belkis's mother at 16, when a conflict with Belkis's daughter that escalated. At first Alejandra stayed in the household of a friend. Alejandra had a boyfriend at the time. She did not feel comfortable imposing on her friend's family and had no way to communicate with Belkis, so Alejandra went to live with her boyfriend. In tears, Alejandra



explained that her boyfriend raped her shortly after she went to stay with him. Their relationship did not last, but it resulted in a son, Rigoberto, born in 1993, who was mostly raised by paternal grandparents.

The next several years were a downward spiral for Alejandra. The scars of her childhood abuse, the lack of cohesive integration into Belkis's household and the trauma of sexual abuse at the hands of her boyfriends led Alejandra to drink heavily. In order to support herself, Alejandra began engaging in sex-work. One of her clients is the father of her three youngest children. Belkis and her sister's remained part of Alejandra's life and Alejandra stated that on at least one occasion Tati took Alejandra and her second oldest child from Naranjo to Puerto Plata, in the North, to get Alejandra away from the negative influences. After a few months the father of her youngest three children lured Alejandra back to Naranjo by claiming that one of her children was sick. Once she came back Alejandra described once again falling into a cycle of substance use and sex work.

By the late 1990's Alejandra began to turn her life around. She had four children in total. She ended her relationship with the father of her youngest three children, stopped drinking all together and began fulltime work as a domestic. While the pay was sometimes less than sex-work, it afforded Alejandra more respectability in the community. By the time I met Alejandra in 2002, her struggles with substance use and engagement in sex work were a part of her past. Alejandra consistently worked as a domestic to support her family. The reason why I believed for so many years that Alejandra only had three children was because her eldest son has not lived with her in the decade I have known Alejandra. Despite the fact that gossip spreads quickly in Naranjo, I did not hear about Alejandra's former life until she herself told me in 2011.

Between 2002 and 2006 Alejandra's home and personal life seemed fairly consistent. She did enter common law marriages. Alejandra's 16 year-old daughter, Marilyn, reported that her mother had entered four common law marriages, but more generally Alejandra worked, cared for her children and studied when she could. In the early 2000's Alejandra's life was hard, but not without hope for future employment through education, as this is when she was enrolled in the literacy program. I did not have consistent contact with Alejandra between 2006 and 2010. When I did see Alejandra on my yearly visits she looked well, although there were periods when she reported unemployment and the strain this caused as a single mother trying to support her three young children.

In the summer of 2011 I returned to Batey Sonrisa for a brief visit. By this time Alejandra's life had changed dramatically. She was rail thin, with reddish hair and visibly ill. My time working in the Dominican Republic and Haiti had schooled me well in symptoms of HIV/AIDS and Alejandra confirmed that she had tested positive but had been unable to access treatment because of the prohibitive costs that were required for her to become enrolled in the World Health Organization's HAART (Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy) program. While the anti-retroviral drugs were free, patients were required to pay for series of labs and testing that combined with transportation costs left Alejandra unable to access treatment. I was able to assist Alejandra with some of these costs and with the additional support of her church, Alejandra had successfully enrolled and begun receiving anti-retroviral treatment through the HAART program at the time I returned to conduct dissertation fieldwork in the summer of 2012.

Nonetheless, Alejandra was constantly on edge about the possibility of being dropped from the HAART program because of her undocumented status. While the World Health Organization does not require citizenship for people to qualify and enroll in the HAART program, treatment in

sanctioned hospitals is entirely administered by Dominican staff, many are not sympathetic towards people they perceive as Haitian. Alejandra would recount after many visits that her attending physician would comment that she needed to show Dominican documentation if she wanted to continue to receive services.

While treatment dramatically improved Alejandra's health she was no longer able to perform the physically taxing labor that is typically required of domestic servants. By the time I began my fieldwork in June 2012, Alejandra had been unemployed for a year and a half. She supported her three children with the meager salary of her 17 year-old son, Andi. Andi worked at a small cracker factory that opened in the batey and that took advantage of the cheap and willing labor source. For \$2,500RD a month Andi worked 40 hours a week at the factory. During this same period the minimum wage for a full time employee was \$8000RD. Alejandra used this money, produce from a small plot her son also tended, and the \$1000RD monthly child support to keep her family afloat. They often went hungry, but would not have been able to survive if not for social and kin networks that her family could rely on for additional food, or credit when needed.

It was in this context that Alejandra was raising her only daughter Marilyn, during 2012-2013, when I daily spent time with her family as part of my fieldwork. Marilyn was a 16 year-old 8<sup>th</sup> grader, who loved to write songs, watching Spanish soap operas, and play with the infants and toddlers of friends and family. Marilyn was passing all of her classes the year I conducted my fieldwork, but acknowledged a lack of interest in school, or pursuing education beyond the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Marilyn articulated in conversations that she hoped to marry when she turned 18 or shortly thereafter and start a family. She stated that she would work if there were opportunities to help her future partner with household expenses, but envisioned her future primarily through the

lens of motherhood and marriage. Alejandra's vision for her daughter's future sharply diverged from Marilyn's. Alejandra would discuss the possibility of studying, learning a technical skill and gaining employment/relatively high paying job as critical to her daughter's future. Alejandra could not provide a specific plan for how Marilyn could realistically achieve these milestones, but the divergent pathways that mother and daughter described resulted in quotidian conflict and frustration in an otherwise loving relationship.

Alejandra's life history and her daily struggles both for the survival of her family and for her daughter's future are not unique in the communities with whom I work. Mothers and older generations of women often talk about the new opportunities that younger generations have today. These perceived opportunities typically involve formal study and through education the possibility for better paying, more stable and respectable employment than the domestic work traditionally performed by women in the communities. For mothers of adolescent girls and grandmothers, part of this path for a better future involves delaying marriage and motherhood. It was unclear to me how congruent these ideas were with those of adolescent females and young women, like Marilyn, though.

The voices of young women, like Marilyn and her peers, complicate the hegemonic global discourse about the value and consequences of adolescent motherhood and challenge the utility of standalone reproductive health education programs and contraceptive distribution as a pathway out of poverty. Women like Alejandra and her daughter, Marilyn, actively work to construct meaningful roles and to develop adult identities within their communities. Alejandra's struggle for her survival and that of her family's in the mist of institutional, class and gender discrimination as well as her compromised health status highlight how females of Haitian descent, living in the bateyes of the Dominican Republic, must confront and contest entrenched

structural barriers that put their lives and well-being at risk. Being seen as a mature, adult woman in these communities is one of the few opportunities for females to receive respect in the bateyes. Therefore, understanding pathways to womanhood—and the role of motherhood and marriage as a part of this process—has important implications for understanding how modern discourses on adolescent motherhood may actually further marginalize and disempower older adolescent females.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **History of Haiti and DR and anti-Haitianism**

A reflection on the historical relationship between the Dominican Republic (DR) and Haiti provides an important point of reference to understand the roots of modern day discrimination towards people perceived to be of Haitian descent in the DR. The Dominican Republic and Haiti are located in the Caribbean on the island of Hispaniola. European colonial rule dominated over the entire island beginning in the 16th century. The Spanish controlled the eastern two thirds of the island, the territory which became the DR, while the French maintained a stronghold in the western part of the island, now Haiti. Haiti gained its independence from France in 1796, as both sides of the island began to form distinct national identities (Moya Pons, 1998). The independence movement that eventually led to the establishment of an independent Dominican Republic was ideologically presupposed for Dominicans to be culturally, linguistically and ethnically distinct from Haitians.

A racialized anti-Haitian doctrine became embedded in Dominican national ideology in the 20th century under the dictatorship of T Rafael Trujillo (1930-1961). Trujillo racialized anti-Haitianism within Dominican society (Torres-Saillant, 1998) by creating a cult of Dominican identity that depicted Dominicans as Spanish, educated, and Christian. Trujillo argued that in contrast, Haitians represented Africanism, barbarism and Satanism (voodoo) (Moya Pons, 1998).

The 1937 massacre of 30,000 people perceived to be Haitian along the two countries' borders illustrates the most overt manifestation of anti-Haitian sentiment during the reign of Trujillo. The only Haitians spared were those working on sugar plantations and living in the bateyes (Moya Pons, 1998). This episode highlights the historically state- sanctioned

discrimination by the Dominican people toward people of Haitian descent.

Systematic, institutional discrimination towards Haitians and their descendants in the Dominican Republic has been maintained by two primary methods. One method of exclusion involves denying Dominican Haitians birth certificates (Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004; Moya Pons, 1998). Individuals without a birth certificate do not have the right to attend public schools, access public medical and social services or fully participate in civic life (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004). In September 2013, the Dominican Supreme Court passed a constitutional amendment retroactively revoking citizenship to anyone whose maternal ancestry could be traced to a Haitian immigrant who entered the Dominican Republic since 1929 (Kristensen & Wooding, 2013). Institutionalized discrimination impacts key areas of life and has long-term implications for health, education and social, as well as economic, mobility. Known locally as, *la sentencia*, this new constitutional amendment is the latest overt manifestation of the Dominican government's effort to exclude and marginalize not only Haitians, but anyone born on Dominican soil with traceable Haitian ancestry. Despite international calls for its revocation and a ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, in October 2014, declaring the new constitutional amendment a violation of human rights and international law, the Dominican government has continued its policy of denying and revoking citizenship to people born in the Dominican Republic who are perceived to be of Haitian descent.

The second method of exclusion involves the physical segregation of Dominican Haitians into communities called *bateyes* (described in more detail in next section). Haitians and Dominican Haitians who live in the bateyes deal with chronic hunger, poor sanitation and inadequate housing (Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004; Simmons, 2010). Haitians who migrate to the Dominican Republic and their descendants occupy the lowest economic social stratum,

which has resulted in generational cycles of illiteracy. A Dominican Haitian female born into these circumstances represents the most marginalized group within Dominican society because of her ethnicity, lack of legal status, gender, and age. Early pregnancy must be understood in this context.

### **Transnational Migration on the Island of Hispaniola**

The evolution and continued existence of the bateyes and their inhabitance is intimately tied to processes of globalization whereby materially poor actors have responded to their economic conditions through transnational migration. Peggy Levitt and Ninna Nyberg-Sorensen (2004) define transnational migration as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. Thus, sending and receiving societies (societies that immigrants originate from and societies that receive them) become understood as constituting one single field of analysis (p. 2).” A transnational migrant is not singularly defined by whether or not he/she has crossed a geopolitical boundary. Children, cousins and grandparents who have never left their country of birth, but who have family or close kin involved as migrating actors can also be considered transnational migrants because they are impacted by increased financial resources through remittances, by the physical distance of loved ones, by the insecurity of potentially having an undocumented family member removed from their country of settlement, etc. (Levitt & Nyberg-Sorensen, 2004). The fluidity of migration between Haiti and the Dominican Republic has resulted in communities of transnational migrants both in the DR and in Haiti. The bateyes represent one setting where immigrants from Haiti and their descendants —many of whom have



never stepped foot on Haitian soil—and poor Dominicans who claim no Haitian ancestry co-exist in a common struggle for daily survival.

The emergence of transnational migration in the contexts of nations of the global south, like the Dominican Republic and Haiti, is a response to economic shifts largely driven by fiscal policies of countries of the global north and institutions that represent these countries like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Sending states, increasingly in financially strained conditions at least partly the result of structural readjustment loans, provide a setting in which citizens have to engage in migration to ensure family and self-survival, even in the face of racial barriers, discrimination and economic hardship after arrival in a receiving country (Levit & Glick Schiller, 2004). While the Dominican Republic is indexed as a developing nation, Haiti is not, and is the poorest nation in the western hemisphere. In addition, the Dominican Republic is the only country Haitians can access without crossing a water barrier, making it a prime destination for Haitian transnationals seeking economic relief from the crushing poverty that exists at home.

Haitian migrant workers have crossed into the DR for over a century with the express purpose of working on sugar plantations owned both domestically and internationally (Martinez, 1995; Moya Pons, 1998). Dominicans consider the cutting of cane to be the lowest form of labor and generally refuse to perform this task within sugar production (Martinez, 1995). Because of the political strife and poor economy that existed and continues to exist in Haiti, some seasonal workers chose to permanently settle in the DR. Today, the descendants of these migrant workers, Dominican Haitians, live in segregated communities, called bateyes, originally designed to temporarily house migrant cane laborers (Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004; Martinez, 1995). The bateyes have historically existed on the periphery of the sugarcane plantation. Today they also

exist on the margins of Dominican society. Batey communities on average have far worse infrastructure than other Dominican communities. It is estimated that 32.5% of homes nationally lack access to latrines versus 70% of batey homes (Achecar, Ramirez, Polanco, Quiterio, & Ronzino, 2007; Water Life Foundation, 2014). 15% of the national population is estimated to not have access to safe drinking water compared to 43% of batey populations (Achecar, Ramirez, Polanco, Quiterio, & Ronzino, 2007; Water Life Foundation, 2014). HIV prevalence in the bateyes is estimated to be five times higher than the national prevalence rate (Achecar, Ramirez, Polanco, Quiterio, & Ronzino, 2007). Finally, 25% of women in bateyes are estimated to have completed high school versus 57% nationally (Achecar, Ramirez, Polanco, Quiterio, & Ronzino, 2007; Water Life Foundation, 2014). As I argue later, the bateyes can therefore be conceptualized in part as structurally violent settlements because of the economic and migratory status of the population, community vulnerability due public health hazards, and the imprint of historical marginalization and discrimination of the inhabitants by the receiving country.

### **Structural Shifts in the Dominican Economy**

Since the 1980's, Latin America as a whole has experienced declines in real wages, increased privatization of major industries and reductions in state social subsidies (Maier & Lebon, 2010; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001; Abbassi & Lutjens Rowman, 2002). These shifts have been largely driven by structural adjustment policies that the governments' of nation states have agreed to for the purpose of discharging external debt. (Maier & Lebon, 2010; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2001). The Dominican Republic is no exception to this trend. As part of structural adjustment agreements between funding organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the Dominican government agreed to privatize state owned industries such

as sugar mills, electric generation plants and electric distribution companies, and telecommunications, etc. (Steven, 2007). The privatization of sugar processing plants, compounded by the declining world price of sugar, ultimately led to the decline of the sugar cane industry and closure of several of the country's main sugar processing plants—including Ingenio San Luis which served the communities where I conducted dissertation fieldwork (Steven, 2007). The decline of the sugarcane industry reflects more than just a loss of employment for people who inhabit the bateyes, it was part of a larger trend that has resulted in a shift from agriculture to manufacturing, tourism and remittances, which today represent the largest contributors to the Dominican Republic's Gross Domestic Product (IMF, 2013).

At the same time that the sugar economy was in decline, the Dominican Republic entered a period of rapid inflation and increased cost of living that has outpaced real wages (Safa H. , 2002). In 2010, the International Monetary Fund estimated that real average hourly wages had fallen 20% compared to wages in 2000 (IMF, 2013). In 2000, 32% of the Dominican population was estimated to live at or below the poverty line. By 2005, this number increased to 50% of the Dominican population living at or below the poverty line (IMF, 2013). This sharp spike was largely the result of a national financial crisis brought on by the collapse of Banco Intercontinental (Baninter), after it defrauded both individual investors and the Dominican government out of U.S. \$2.2 billion (Steven, 2007). Yet in 2010, 40% of the Dominican population was living at or below the poverty line, which is still 8 percentage points higher than 2000. This demonstrates that more people are being pushed into poverty as rapid inflation and decreases in real wages continue within the Dominican economy.

### **Sugar Cane Industry and Haitian Migrant Workers**

By the second decade of the 20th century, sugar became the largest contributor to the Dominican Republic's gross domestic product (Moya Pons, 1998) and depended heavily on seasonal Haitian labor. Official government contracts between the Haitian and Dominican governments allowed for Haitian seasonal laborers to work in the cane harvest (Moya Pons, 1998). The fact that Haitians residing within the bateyes were spared during the 1937 massacre demonstrates the importance of Haitian labor within the Dominican sugar economy. As seasonal laborers have permanently settled in the DR, their descendants find themselves subjected to discriminatory social and political practices. Dominicans of Haitian descent are frequently denied birth certificates, access to public education and access to basic health services that are afforded to other Dominicans (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004). The decline of the sugar cane economy, drop in real wages, and government divestment in social services have each had multiple consequences for people living in the bateyes. While work in the cane fields has been described as brutal, and a form of indentured servitude by both academics and my informants (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Martinez, 1995; Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004), it nevertheless represented one of the few sources of employment for people living in bateyes, which are removed from cities and industrial centers. When the sugar processing plant Ingenio San Luis shuttered in 1998, the inhabitants of the bateyes where I conducted fieldwork have struggled to find consistent means of support.

### **The feminization of labor within Dominican society**

The feminization of labor in the DR, as in other countries, has arisen as employers have realized that a female labor force can be paid less than a male workforce, and female employees can be more strictly regulated and controlled (Abbassi & Lutjens Rowman, 2002; Maier &

Lebon, 2010). In the bateyes, the feminization of labor has two major consequences. First, it represents a significant economic shift in who provides for families (Maier & Lebon, 2010; Safa H. , 2002). Employers hire women at lower wages, which has had the consequence of displacing males from their traditional role of providing significant financial support for their families in the bateyes. Second, young women are increasingly forced to seek employment outside the bateyes, where they become vulnerable to exploitation (see results section on safety) (Abbassi & Lutjens Rowman, 2002). As Maier & Lebon (2010) state, “to the extent that poor women are more likely to be in precarious jobs earning less, and tend to suffer more interruptions to their paid work to fulfill their domestic responsibilities they face a cumulative chain of disadvantages and discrimination throughout their life (p. 55).”

Domestic service and low-level employment in the free trade zones are two of the few consistent employment opportunities available outside the bateyes. These are both spheres inhabited by mostly young women who can perform physically taxing, repetitive labor for long hours and low wages (Safa H. I., 1995). The fact that young women actively seek out positions in domestic service and in the free trade zones demonstrates the conditions of extreme poverty that poor people, particularly women in the bateyes, try to resist (Safa H. I., 1995).

### **Gender in Dominican and Haitian Society**

On a global scale women experience inequality compared to men. The Gender Inequity Index notes, in particular, three dimensions of women’s disadvantage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: empowerment, economic activity and reproductive health (Gaye, Klugman, Kovacevic, Twigg, & Zambrano, 2010). Women’s inequality in these areas has been directly linked to higher morbidity and mortality for both mothers and their children, less access to education as well as

greater risk for interpersonal violence (Moreno, 2007; Sen, 2001; Farmer, 1996). Within Latin America gender inequality is rooted in patriarchal traditions and customs imported with the conquistadores and perpetuated through years of colonization, military regimes and dictatorships as well as the ideological teachings of the Roman Catholic Church (Nyberg Sorensen, 1995; Rodriguez, 2010; Quinones Mayo & Perla Resnick, 1996).

Spanish Conquistadores brought over patriarchal social structures, embedded in Roman law and the Catholic Church, upon their arrival to the Americas and Caribbean. Specifically, Roman law, reinforced through the Catholic Church, codified the social, intellectual and moral inferiority of women within society (Quinones Mayo & Perla Resnick, 1996). During the colonial era Spanish and Portuguese societies functioned under Roman law, which institutionally relegated women to the status of children, by declaring them tutors for life to either their closest male relative or husband. Under the same system men were “established as patriarchs, heads of households, or lords and masters” (Quinones Mayo & Perla Resnick, 1996, p. 261). Catholicism has reinforced the idea that a woman’s place is in the home and that the male is the head of the family with the ultimate and final authority to make decisions (Rodriguez, 2010).

More specifically, patriarchal social norms were embedded into the social fabric of the Spanish colonies through the caudillo. The caudillo represented a local power/landowner within a community who was granted authority by the crown. The caudillo locally enforced his power by exercising tightly controlled patronage networks whereby the caudillo would bestow favors onto community members that remained loyal, doing his bidding. “Embodied in the person of the caudillo, power is desirable as a means of action and as a vehicle for granting respect to all who are identified with the strong, dynamic leader. Thus the caudillo exemplifies the head of the national household, who rules over the country, supported by national law and religious

ideology, just as the patriarch rules over the family” (Quinones Mayo & Perla Resnick, 1996, p. 261). The power and patronage of the caudillo became a model reproduced at the household level throughout Latin America, where men hold ultimate authority over the lives and bodies of women and children. Machismo and marianismo represent living embodiments of gendered power dynamics that took root in Latin America during this time.

Machismo embodies duality in its traditional form. On the one hand, a traditional machista is responsible, hardworking, highly values the affection of his family and defends those that are weaker (Nyberg Sorensen, 1995). A machista is also driven to demonstrate his strength, at its most basic level through virility, by seeking out multiple sexual partners, acting aggressively, showing strength of will and demonstrating little emotional vulnerability (Mayo, 1997; Nyberg Sorensen, 1995; Beattie, 2002). These latter qualities are most frequently associated with machismo in the modern lexicon. At its core it is a value system “...dictated by the belief in male superiority and dominance popularized as machismo, and legitimized through patriarchal social systems” (Quinones Mayo & Perla Resnick, 1996, p. 265). Machismo provides men with complete economic and social domination over women extending to legal, political, cultural, psychological and reproductive spheres (Beattie, 2002).

The feminine counterpart to machismo is marianismo. Marianismo represents an idealized version of womanhood, based on the Virgin Mary (Quinones Mayo & Perla Resnick, 1996). Domesticity and submissiveness to the male head of household are the basic standards a woman must live up to within the cult of marianismo. Sacrifice and selflessness are the hallmarks of a good daughter and wife who never questions the authority and decisions of male patriarchs (Wood & Paul, 1997). The trajectory for females under the patriarchal social system that machismo and marianismo encompass is for a girl to gain her education from her mother at

home, learning to cook, clean and care for children at an early age. A girl's education culminates in marriage, where upon the highest possible life achievement is bearing children and receiving respect through this role and the love and affection of offspring, to whom a mother will selflessly and completely dedicate her life (Quinones Mayo & Perla Resnick, 1996; Jezzini, 2013; Moreno M. , 2009). "Only motherhood, the epitome of status for women, earns women the right to reverence, but even it does not earn them the right to control oneself... [motherhood] is a rite of passage for women who are reared to please men in denial of self and their individual goals and desires... they are conditioned not to question the idea that childbirth is the culmination of fulfilled womanhood" (Quinones Mayo & Perla Resnick, 1996, p. 266).

Gender roles and attitudes are dynamic and evolving; machismo and marianismo are no exception to this. The poor of the Dominican Republic have never fully realized the idealized roles and gender stratification embodied within machismo and marianismo. While poor women are expected to maintain households in the DR, remaining exclusively within the domestic sphere has not been an option for poor women whose labor is often critical to ensuring basic household survival (Beattie, 2002; Safa H. I., 1995). In the specific case of the Dominican Republic, the break-up of marital unions is not a new phenomenon and for many generations poor women have functioned as heads of households, supporting their families, in addition to attending to domestic matters (Safa H. , 2002). In the neo-liberal free market driven economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Dominican women increasingly outpace men in the low-wage labor sector, upending traditional attitudes of the male breadwinner captured within the machismo value system (Weis, Centrie, Valentin-Juarbe, & Fine, 2002; Safa H. I., 1995). As women assert themselves as heads of households and increasingly as breadwinners they complicate the historical definitions and principles of machismo and marianismo (Safa H. I., 1995).



Nonetheless, throughout Latin America, societies continue to psychologically embrace the idea of male intellectual superiority and that women should be held to a higher moral standard (Ingoldsby, 1991; Weis, Centrie, Valentin-Juarbe, & Fine, 2002). In her study of gender relations, work and home life in the Dominican Republic, Helen Safa (1995) found that 80% of working married women in the DR considered their husbands the head of household, deferring financial decisions to them.

A legacy of marianismo is a strict dualism of roles that girls and women must choose between. You either proscribe to the rigid and highly repressive norms of marianismo to receive some modicum of respect within society, or you risk being labeled as a prostitute/whore if you choose to openly like anything that falls outside the sphere of domesticity. This duality is clearly known to every man, woman and child in the Dominican Republic. You can be *una mujer de la casa* [a woman of the house], a marianista, or *una mujer de la calle* [a woman of the street]. Historically, there has been no alternatives and no middle ground (Safa H. I., 1995). Over the last 20 years young women, especially poor females, find themselves having to struggle with traditional patriarchal ideas imbedded in the psychological fabric of Dominican society as well as conflicting messages that young women have new opportunities to enter public spaces through education, work and financial independence. These new and old messages create a confusing context for younger and older generations to make sense of how the roles of motherhood and wife, particularly in relation to respect and an adult identity in bateyes, should best factor into the life trajectories of young women today.

## CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### Structural Violence

“The term structural violence is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm’s way. The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people, typically not those responsible for perpetuating such inequalities” (Farmer, Nizeye, Stulac, & Keshavjee, 2006, p. 1686). Unlike direct violence (e.g. someone walking up, shooting and killing a young man thereby eliminating the possibility that said young man will study, work or realize personal fulfillment in the future), structural violence limits an individual’s or a group’s potential through insidious and persistent institutional policies and practices (Farmer, Nizeye and Stulac, 2006). At the heart of structural violence theory is unequal power in determining the distribution of resources, which creates unavoidable structural inequalities (Ho, 2007). Structural violence also takes on a gendered dimension when considering that worldwide women of reproductive age are at a greater risk for morbidity and mortality, work for lower wages and disproportionately are more likely to be victims of family and sexual violence compared to men (Anglin, 1998; Farmer, Nizeye, Stulac, & Keshavjee, 2006).

The imposition of institutional barriers by the Dominican government against people of Haitian descent and discriminatory practices experienced in daily life constitute structural violence. This violence is illustrated at multiple levels. At the highest level of government structural violence is enacted through *la sentencia*, the constitutional amendment revoking citizenship rights to anyone born in the Dominican Republic who descends from a Haitian

immigrant who entered the country after 1929 (Blake, 2014). Prior to this ruling there was a de-facto policy within state hospitals and government offices, issuing documentation, to deny birth certificates to children born to mothers perceived to be of Haitian descent (Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004). Formally legalizing the practice of denying documentation to generations of Dominican's of Haitian descent demonstrates structural violence through the negation of the basic human right to citizenship and a country (Blake, 2014; Ho, 2007). Without a birth certificate, Dominicans of Haitian descent find themselves exposed to harassment by government representatives and subject to random deportations, a denial of even the most basic security.

Second, structural violence is enacted by creating an inferior class within Dominican society, those without a nation and therefore without the benefits and security conferred to citizens under Dominican law. Structural violence at this level is executed in daily practice, by placing undocumented Dominicans of Haitian descent in a position where they are subject to inferior pay and less workplace security compared to documented Dominican workers, denied state healthcare and denied access to public education. Numerous studies and reports have documented and outlined the ways in which undocumented Dominicans are discriminated against in the workplace, by being paid inferior wages, placed in unsafe and hazardous working conditions and not receiving legally mandated workplace benefits, like severance and health insurance (Blake, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2002; Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004).

Undocumented women are particularly vulnerable in the workplace as my data demonstrates. Several of my participants discussed how in addition to the above, they were subject to sexual harassment and coercion by employers (Salusky, 2015). Blake (2014) also discussed how undocumented people of Haitian descent are regularly denied services at state hospitals in direct opposition to the Dominican Constitution, which was amended in 2010 to afford free healthcare

to all people, regardless of documentation status. This situation frequently results in people having to forgo medical care even when illness is acute (Simmons, 2010). During 12 years of engagement in the bateyes, I have seen numerous cases where undocumented Dominicans, as well as Haitians, were denied care at state hospitals because of lack of payment, even in critical lifesaving circumstances.

Structural violence also diminishes the health and material wellbeing of Dominicans of Haitian descent through educational policy. Within the Dominican Republic an undocumented child does not have the legal right to attend public schools, virtually eliminating the possibility of attaining literacy skills, a high school diploma, or any kind of vocational and university training necessary to facilitate earning a living wage as an adult (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Historically, school administrators might turn a blind eye to undocumented students, but matriculation into school and passing grades does not guarantee a diploma, increasingly a necessity for even low paying jobs. In the Dominican Republic, there are two possible diplomas conferred at the secondary school level. Both require sitting for standardized national exams that can only be taken with proof of a valid Dominican birth certificate and for students 18 and older a Dominican cedula (identity card). The first national exam is administered upon completion of the eighth grade and is a requirement to matriculate into high school. Upon completing and passing the twelfth grade a second national exam is a prerequisite for a high school diploma. For several of the young people I have known and followed over the years, having a Dominican birth certificate did not guarantee that they would be able to take the twelfth grade national exam.

Upon turning 18 a Dominican citizen must take their birth certificate to a government documentation office in order to receive a cedula, which becomes required documentation for any legal adult. Not infrequently, young adults experience discrimination once they go to

exchange their birth certificates for cédulas and are denied this essential documentation. A person over the age of 17, who only has a birth certificate, is essentially undocumented when it comes to acquiring employment, seeking education, healthcare services, social services, etc. I have watched several young people study through high school, only to be denied a cédula upon turning 18, finding themselves stateless and unable to complete secondary education. The only potentially worse outcome is for children born in the DR to never formally study because they did not encounter sympathetic school administrators.

Third, the physical segregation of Dominican Haitians into bateyes illustrates the most visible manifestation of structural violence, through spatial isolation into virtual ghettos (Simmons, 2010). Most bateyes in the DR, including the two where I conducted my dissertation fieldwork and with whom I have primarily been engaged over the past 12 years, lack basic infrastructure, including potable water, garbage disposal and transportation, compared with national statistics (Achecar, Ramirez, Polanco, Quiterio, & Ronzino, 2007; Simmons, 2010). The clear differential in living conditions between the bateyes, which are mostly inhabited by people of Haitian descent, versus the rest of Dominican society highlights the ways people experience structural violence in their daily lives. Alejandra's story demonstrates how structural violence can play out over time in lives of women of the bateyes.

Finally, within the bateyes and Dominican society females of Haitian descent are particularly vulnerable to structural violence because of their gender. The long history of machismo and preferential treatment of men in both Dominican and Haitian society places girls and women at a disadvantage. Additionally, poverty places girls and women at an increased risk for interpersonal violence and higher morbidity and mortality (Farmer, 1994). The Dominican Republic is estimated to be a country with one of the highest sex trafficking rates in Latin

America and femicide is the fourth leading cause of death for women of reproductive age (Comite de America Latina y el Caribe, 2008; Guinn & Steglich, 2002). Given these facts, girls and women of the bateyes find themselves subject to structural violence because of their gender, their physical location, their ethnicity and poverty status.

## **Cultural Violence**

Cultural violence provides another vehicle through which structural violence can be enacted. Cultural violence has been defined as aspects of culture like language, religion, ideology, art and science that provide justifications for structural violence (Galtung, 1990). In the Dominican context, Anti-Haitianism as a national ideology has provided a mechanism to distinguish Haitians and their descendants as inferior others in contrast to Dominicans. The 1937 Massacre of Haitians and Dominicans that appeared phenotypically “Haitian” provides the clearest illustration of the practice of cultural violence in the Dominican Context. Books like *La Isla al Reyes*, by former Dominican President Joaquin Balaguer, explicitly outlines a national identity presenting Dominican culture as the emulation of everything Spanish, Catholic, modern and advanced in contrast to Haitian culture which is portrayed as African, voodoo, backward and barbaric (Balaguer, 1983). This cult of Dominican identity provides a cultural justification for structural discrimination towards Haitians and their descendants as a mechanism to maintain Dominican Hispano-Catholic cultural and prevent the encroachment of Haitians and Haitianism into the Dominican Republic (Balaguer, 1983).

Given the context of extreme marginalization and disenfranchisement that females of Haitian descent face in Dominican society it is important to understand the ways through which young women cope and resist discrimination and explicit messages of inferiority. How do

females of Haitian descent construct adult roles and pathways to adulthood in restricted settings where they face persecution? From a post-structural perspective, privileging the voices of females of Haitian descent is critical to shift the discourse and understandings of “what is in the best interest of girls and women” from a top-down approach to a locally driven perspective. My previous research suggests that motherhood and/or marriage provides one possible pathway to achieving an adult identity in the bateyes for adolescent females (Salusky, 2013), but is contrasted by a body of literature that stigmatizes early motherhood as a pathway to poverty.

### **Global Discourse on Adolescent Motherhood**

Adolescent motherhood is a global phenomenon (Bearinger, Sieving, Ferguson, & Sharma, 2007; Berthoud & Robson, 2001; Flores & Nunez, 2001; UNFPA, 2009). The United Nations defines adolescence as occurring between the ages of 10 and 19. Worldwide, adolescent girls represent an increasing percentage of mothers (UNFPA, 2006). While attitudes and practices regarding sexual initiation and pregnancy vary across cultural contexts, the dominant global discourse surrounding adolescent motherhood frames this phenomenon as a problem (Bearinger et al., 2007; Bretheny & Stephens, 2007; Cherrington & Bretheny, 2005). Such conversations present young motherhood as an international issue for medical and socioeconomic reasons (Berthoud & Robson, 2001).

Literature and policy discourse argue that young mothers and their children confront higher maternal and child mortality and lower educational and economic outcomes compared to adult mothers (Berthoud & Robson, 2001; Florez & Nunez, 2001; UNFDP, 2009). In research conducted in the U.S., pregnancy before the age of 19 is often associated with low birth weight and increased morbidity and mortality for both adolescent mother and child when compared to

adult mothers (Dangal, 2006; Malhotra, 2008). Yet researchers have invested little effort to explore causal pathways and mediating factors that impact such associations. Current research suggests that medical risks only increase for females under the age of 15 at the time of childbirth. Females 15 and older are not at risk statistically when they receive proper nutrition, medical care and live in a safe environment. The above stated negative medical outcomes actually result from conditions of environmental poverty typically predating the onset of first adolescent pregnancy (Lawlor, D., Shaw, M., 2002).

Another component of the mainstream discourse on early motherhood involves education and economic outcomes. It is argued that in many cultural contexts, young mothers also face lower education, higher unemployment and lower income compared to adult mothers (Berthoud & Robson, 2001; Florez & Nunez, 2009; UNFDP, 2009). Research used to support this assertion cites studies conducted in the U.S. that suggest children of young mothers are disproportionately at risk of spending their childhood in poverty compared to the children of adult mothers (Dangal, 2006; Driscoll, et al., 2001). Additionally, adolescent pregnancy is associated with early drop out from secondary school, single parenthood and low economic status within industrialized societies (Berthoud & Robson, 2001; Nunez, 2001; UNPDF, 2009; Save the Children, 2006). Studies used to demonstrate poor outcomes for young mothers often contain serious methodological flaws. Frequently such studies do not compare outcomes of young mothers to control groups with similar social/economic backgrounds, confounding results (Duncan, 2007).

Finally, the discussion about the economic consequences of adolescent motherhood exists within a Western neo-liberal framework that privileges the income-producing worker (Cherrington & Breheny, 2005). If a young woman becomes pregnant at an early age she is less



likely to finish secondary education, successfully enter the workforce and therefore become a 'productive' member of society. This logic does not take into account the fact that many adolescent mothers already find themselves disenfranchised from the formal educational and social and employment systems (Furstenburg, 2007). The few studies that do look at educational and economic outcomes of poor women using comparison groups from the same communities suggest that early motherhood does not put women and their children at any greater risk for long-term poverty than comparison groups who delay pregnancy. For example, Furstenburg (2007) conducted a 30-year longitudinal study in Baltimore and found that poor African American Adolescent mothers had similar economic and education outcomes as poor African American women who delayed pregnancy.

A dearth of literature exists examining the long-term economic and educational consequences of early motherhood outside of Western countries. Very few studies looking at socio-economic outcomes of adolescent mothers take place in settings outside the West. This is important because many poor girls and women in developing societies do not have access to the formal labor sector, or even consistent secondary education, which raises the question: what are the costs and benefits of young motherhood for poor adolescent females within a developing setting? How does beginning to have children in late adolescence impact life outcomes in developing settings compared to equally disadvantaged females who delay first childbirth until their early 20s or later?

Historically, the voices of young mothers have been absent in the discourse on early motherhood. A nascent body of work looking at how young women experience and make meaning of early motherhood has recently emerged in the West. Edin & Kefalas (2005) conducted qualitative research on early motherhood in three Philadelphia communities. They

found that women placed high value on early motherhood and generally believed that early childbirth did not prove an insurmountable obstacle to attaining education. Yet little research exists exploring how young women come into motherhood and how *they* make meaning of this experience in the context of developing nations. Initial work in the Dominican Republic suggests that young motherhood provides important benefits in the face of chronic poverty, as well as ethnic and gender discrimination (Salusky, 2013).

### **Discourses on early motherhood from the DR**

In my earlier research, the narratives of poor, young Dominican mothers of Haitian descent suggested that adolescent motherhood has multilayered meanings and multiple consequences. While young mothers expressed concern about delayed education as a result of becoming pregnant before completing secondary and postsecondary education, none of these women expressed the belief that they were any less likely to ever complete schooling after giving birth. The fact that so many participants experienced delays in secondary education before first pregnancy suggests that other variables such as poverty, lack of documentation, and family discord play much larger roles in educational attainment within poor communities such as the bateyes (Bretheny & Stephens, 2007; Fine & Weiss, 1998; Salusky, 2013; Stevens, 1994). In the face of extreme economic and social marginalization, it is unlikely that anyone in a batey, young or old, will realize the goal of achieving financial security before starting a family. Participants articulated a cost–benefit view of early motherhood similar to Steven’s (1994) alternative-lifestyle model. Steven’s framework suggested that some poor African American females experience motherhood as a positive choice, given limited life opportunities. A majority of participants discussed the belief that they had the same future or more of a future after

becoming a mother as they did before becoming pregnant for the first time. This supports the idea that in environments of extreme poverty the perceived psychosocial and potential long-term economic benefits of early motherhood (e.g., economic security in old age) outweigh potential costs (Salusky, 2013; Stearns, Allal, & Mace, 2008).

Motherhood also appears to have provided young women with a pathway to assert an adult identity within batey communities. Dominican Haitian females must deal with gender and ethnic discrimination. Apart from motherhood and common law marriage, participants identified the hard to achieve goal of financial independence as the only alternative avenue to take on an adult role in the batey. In my previous research, young mothers discussed experiencing a shift both in their self-concept and also in their community's reception after having children. All participants discussed feeling a greater desire to improve their lives and a sense that this struggle brought them in line with an adult identity (Salusky, 2013). Longitudinal studies of poor young mothers in the United States report similar findings surrounding shifting self-concept and emerging adult roles and identities (Dodson, 1999; Edin & Kefalas, 2005). Interview participants consistently indicated that children provided young mothers with motivation to try to study, to work and find some semblance of economic security under extremely adverse conditions. Further, being able to raise a child the community recognizes as well mannered, well-groomed, and that attends school provided mothers with a sense of pride and respect (Salusky, 2013). Life history theory supports findings from my earlier research.

### **Life History Theory**

Life history theory posits that there are two distinct, although not necessarily mutually exclusive, strategies for reproduction and child rearing: fast life history strategies and slow life

history strategies. Fast life history strategy involves diversified bet-hedging by producing the highest possible number of offspring, potentially reproducing with multiple partners and extending the schedule of reproduction by starting to reproduce at an early age (Ellis, et al., 2009). This strategy provides the optimal chance that at least one, although not all, offspring will be competitive and survive to carry on his/her parent's genetic legacy. Slow life history strategy involves conservative bet hedging through high investment parenting and low fertility strategies for the purpose of maximizing the evolutionary competitiveness of a limited number of offspring (MacDonald, 1997). Parents who adopt a slow life history strategy have few children, but invest large amounts of resources in those children to maximize their survival rate and competitiveness within a given environment. Recent research on life history theory has begun to look at how different environmental cues may prime some populations to engage in fast life history strategies while priming other populations to engage in slow life history strategies.

In settings where available resources are fairly stable, where morbidity and mortality rates are low and the opportunity costs of delaying pregnancy and childbearing include life opportunities like education, high paying jobs and social status young women receive environmental cues that there are potentially greater benefits to a slow life history strategy than to a fast life history strategy (MacDonald, 1997). Even in cases where people experience periods of scarcity, like during the Great Depression, children who were born into families that previously were part of the middle class were more likely to adopt a slow life history strategy when coming of age (MacDonald, 1997). One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that even in the midst of an economic crisis, these children and young adults received cues from both their family and community environments indicating that there were still benefits to adopting a slow life history strategy. At a family level there is a middle class legacy of using a slow life

history strategy to conserve resources and invest them in a few select offspring. At the community level there are cues that although real financial scarcity existed there were still relatively low rates of morbidity and mortality (e.g. lack of community level violence or disease). In total, a legacy of slow life history strategy combined with relatively low morbidity and mortality rates can promote a slow life history strategy even in environments of financial stress.

Geronimus (1996) argues that variables occurring at the community level (e.g. disease, violence and unpredictable shifts from abundance to scarcity in available resources) can increase the probability of young people adopting fast life history strategies in response to environmental cues indicating unpredictable resources and high morbidity and mortality. For example, in a seminal study conducted in the 1980's epidemiologists showed that African American men living in Harlem had a higher mortality rate and lower life expectancy than men of the same age in Bangladesh, which was experiencing widespread civil unrest, poverty and famine (McCord, C. and Freeman, H.P., 1990). Given the environmental cues in Harlem (e.g. witnessing violence, experiencing violence, seeing people die at an early age from a host of disease like AIDS, diabetes, cervical cancer heart disease) life history theory incorporating an ecological framework would suggest that young people will be more likely to initiate sex, fecundity and childrearing at an earlier age and with more frequency. This is done in an effort to optimize the chances of being able to raise a child until they can survive independently and to produce multiple children, in order to increase the chances that at least one will survive until reproductive age in an environment of high morbidity, mortality and unpredictability (Ellis et al., 2009; Geronimus, 1997). An ecological life history theory argues that individuals from groups at risk for early morbidity and mortality have an incentive to reproduce early as a mechanism to ensure progeny

and the ability to care for offspring before possible premature death. Taking this into account public policy that stigmatizes and condemns early motherhood should be scrutinized.

Ellis et al. (2009) suggests that environmental cues determining risk for morbidity and mortality are derived from a number of sources. Evolvement in violence can take place either through witnessing, being a victim or a perpetrator of violence. Any of these experiences, especially if they occur repeatedly increase the perception of high morbidity and mortality, potentially priming an individual for a fast life history strategy. Also high rates of morbidity in a particular group or community can increase the probability of someone who identifies as a part of that group or community adopting a fast life history strategy. For example, individuals living in communities that experienced high incidence of HIV/AIDS in the 1980's and 1990's might shift to a fast life history strategy, even if their family legacy was that of a slow life history strategy, in response to community level changes in absolute morbidity and mortality. In a context where violence, illness and high rates of mortality do occur, reproducing at an early age can be an adaptive response even if segments of society find it socially unacceptable. The bateyes are sites where all of these vulnerabilities exist.

Researchers have begun to make the link that a nuanced understanding of adolescent motherhood among the world's poor "cannot be divorced from the political, moral and economic fabric of individual societies at particular points in time (Holgate, Evens & Yuen, 2006; 2)." By examining the cause of adolescent motherhood solely at the individual unit of analysis researchers have blamed young mothers by portraying their behaviors as deviant without examining a) what motherhood means/represents to these young women and b) what contextual and social factors outside of an adolescent female's control contribute to early motherhood as a life pathway (McIntyre, 2000; 44).

Life history theory potentially demonstrates how adolescent motherhood may be an adaptive choice given associated environmental risks some young women face. Young women that come from poor communities (low income women account for the highest percent of adolescent mothers) are at an increased risk for early morbidity and mortality. As a result, it may make good sense for poor females in the bateyes to not delay childbirth until mid to late twenties or thirties, because the chance of being alive and healthy to raise that child to adulthood are statistically lower than for middle or upper middle class Dominican women who delay pregnancy.

### **Research Questions**

In a setting of extreme marginalization, where females are disadvantaged because of their gender, positions as transnational actors in the Dominican Republic, and because of poverty status, ethnographic research is necessary to inform the development of international campaigns and local programs that help women gain empowerment and skills through improved access to education, health and economic resources. To address the global deficit in women's health and empowerment, and fill the gaps in the literature, I examine three main questions as part of my dissertation study. (1) What are the narratives of adolescent girls, mothers and grandmothers surrounding the definition of womanhood/taking on a mature, adult role in the community? Specifically, I questioned adolescent mothers (16-19), adolescent females (16-19) who had never experienced pregnancy, the primary caregivers of adolescent participants and a grandmother generation about the accepted routes for a female to achieve an adult identity within batey communities, about the preferred avenues to womanhood and about the perceived obstacles to achieving womanhood within communities across generations. (2) How do shifting social,

economic and cultural variables influence ideas about routes to womanhood across generations of female Haitian immigrants and their descents? Few studies have examined the role of migration and its contribution to shifting values regarding appropriate pathways to womanhood within the Dominican Haitian context. To explore this, I asked older generations of women about values surrounding womanhood that existed when they were growing up in Haiti and how these values and ideas have transformed as a result of migrating to and living in the DR. Additionally, I explored which values and beliefs older generations attempted to transmit to children and how the role of poverty and discrimination influence decisions about the transmission of values. (3) I asked generations of females whether they would like to see any shifts in existing pathways to womanhood/ achieving a mature, adult identity than those that are realistically available to females in the bateyes today. I explored this question because of my hypothesis that for at least some generations of females the more traditional machista/marianista beliefs would be acknowledged/internalized and I wanted to understand whether and how some females might find associated pathways to womanhood problematic in today's society.

I approach answering these questions from a post structural framework, rooted in privileging the voices of my participants and shifting homogenous discourses surrounding the perceived best pathways to an adult identity for marginalized females of Haitian descent living in two bateyes, in the Dominican Republic.

### **Contribution to the literature**

This research has allowed me the opportunity to study the generational transmission of values and how those historical values might evolve in batey communities due to shifting economics and social policies in the Dominican Republic. Since the bateyes are inhabited by



both Dominican and Haitian cultures, understanding traditional family structures and the traditionally sanctioned time to begin motherhood from a generational perspective can shed further light on the seeming incongruence between the stated best time to begin childbearing and the community norm.

Second, this project examines how adolescent females, both mothers and non-mothers negotiate desires for increasing autonomy in family settings where unconditional submission to primary caregivers is the historically accepted norm as part of machismo and marianismo culture. Likewise, in the face of young women's desires for more freedom, how do primary caregivers negotiate maintaining their daughters' safety in spaces of structural and direct violence?

Third, little research on early motherhood, in any context, privileges understandings of those most directly impacted by the experience— young mothers and their immediate supports. This project will give voice to multiple generations of young mothers who have been silenced in the literature by exploring in-depth the expressed needs and desires young mothers and their families have for themselves and their communities.

## CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

### **Study Sites**

Research was conducted in two bateyes, Chiquito and Sonrisa. Chiquito and Sonrisa are batey communities located an hour drive east of the Dominican Republic's capital city, Santo Domingo. The two bateyes are approximately a 30-minute drive apart. Chiquito is the more urban of the two communities. It is located at the edges of a military town; the border between San Isidro and the military town is indistinct. Sonrisa is geographically much more isolated than Chiquito. Open fields surround the community for at least a mile in each direction. The Dominican government does not officially recognize the existence of many bateyes (Human Rights Watch, 2002; Jesuit Refugee Services, 2004). A census that had recently been completed in batey Sonrisa at the start of my fieldwork estimated an approximate population of 5000. I was unable to locate any census data for batey Chiquito, but would estimate that it is densely inhabited by approximately 1,500 people. In addition to economic depression, many individuals living in Chiquito and Sonrisa have a marginalized national status. Both bateyes are primarily inhabited by Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent, although I have witnessed over time increasing numbers of Dominicans who do not claim Haitian ancestry enter the communities and the edges of Santo Domingo expand and poor people continue to seek inexpensive land and rental properties.

### **Sampling and Recruitment**

My involvement in Chiquito and Sonrisa has evolved over a total of nine years. This sustained involvement in bateyes Sonrisa and Chiquito as an adult literacy facilitator from 2002-

2006, and my Spanish language skills assisted me gaining both access and entry into these communities. While I followed standard IRB protocols in terms of calling town meetings to explain the purpose of my research and consenting participants before recording them, people were very clear that they wanted to help me with my schoolwork because I had helped them and their community in the past. This was ultimately the reason for my access to community members and why participants tolerated my questions, which at times they clearly found bemusing. I recruited participants through my knowledge of the communities and also by relying on key community leaders who directed me to potential participants that met the study criteria when I struggled to locate them on my own.

### **Methodological Approach**

I explore my research questions through a qualitative and ethnographic approach because I am concerned first and foremost with understanding and contextualizing systems of relationships, and the process through which different generations of females of Haitian descent formulate beliefs about best pathways to take on an adult role in the community (Jessor, 1996; Banyard & Miller, 1998). Further, an ethnographic approach of prolonged engagement and interaction with communities with whom I conduct research provides a structure where an outside researcher can begin to identify his/her own preconceived notions in contrast to the perspectives of community members with whom research is conducted (Charmaz, 2006).

My analytic approach involved engaging in an interpretive process with the data. This interpretive framework focused on the meanings of human experiences both as they spontaneously occurred in the course of daily life and through the historical memory of each participant (Geertz, 1973). This allowed me to understand pathways to womanhood from an

emic perspective, by engaging in a narrative process with generations of women whose perspectives have remained unheard (Fine & Weis, 1998). Through this design I was able to understand proximal and distal factors that influence pathways to womanhood amongst a disenfranchised population and how the perception of best pathways have evolved for three generations of Haitian and Dominican Haitian women and adolescent girls.

## **Interviews**

### *1. Generational Interviews*

To arrive at understanding pathways through an emic perspective/approach, I conducted a series of dyadic life history interviews in Spanish with: six adolescent females (16-19) who had not experienced pregnancy at the time of interview and their mothers; three women between 21 and 31 who had never experienced pregnancy and two of their mothers (one participant's primary caregiver was dead); nine adolescent mothers (16-19) and their mothers. Additionally, I interviewed 10 women between the ages of 47 and 71 (mean age: 58.6) all of whom were grandmothers to both daughters and granddaughters. I initially intended to conduct triadic interviews across generations of women in the same families. However, because the particular population I work with is marked by high rates of physical mobility, high morbidity and mortality and traditions of extended family taking in children I realized, once in the field, that I would struggle to reach saturation if I followed this model.

<b>INTERVIEW GROUP</b>	<b># PARTICIPANTS INTERVIEWED</b>
Adolescent mothers (16-19)	10
Primary caregivers adolescent mothers	10
Adolescent females (16-19) never pregnant	6
Primary caregivers adolescent mothers never pregnant	6
Women (21-31) who never experienced pregnancy	4
Primary caregivers of women (21-31) who never experienced pregnancy	2
Grandmothers	10

## *2. Field Observations and Field Immersion*

My ongoing residence from June 2012 through May 2013, in one of the two bateyes where I conducted life history interviews, allowed me ongoing access to the quotidian activities of batey life. Living in similarly inadequate housing, with the same lack of infrastructure as my neighbors provided a unique opportunity to begin to understand through experience some of the obstacles that people in the bateyes confront daily. I write this with the acknowledgement that my wood shack was considered luxurious by most community members' standards because I had an indoor toilet and did not have to share the small space with anyone. While the costs of my weekly journeys outside the batey Sonrisa were high, it was not prohibitive the way it is for most community members. Finally, I never had to deal with hunger or forgo medical care during my fieldwork, a luxury unheard of for anyone else in the community. I did, however, have to haul water, learn to burn trash, kill tarantulas, mice and other vermin, sit with the quiet and monotony of blackouts, as well as accept deafening noise well into the middle of the night from local discos every Thursday through Sunday and then be awoken at six am every weekday and Sunday by the blaring music of an evangelical church located across from my home. Overtime, these experiences provided some insight into the frustration and challenges people living in the bateyes deal with daily, year in and out.

## **Case study**

I conducted an extended case study with one family, Alejandra and her three youngest children, during nine months of my fieldwork. Alejandra's family presented an ideal case study because we had an established trusting relationship prior to my conducting fieldwork. In addition, while the case study is always a unique representation, basic facts about Alejandra's family composition are common. She is a single mother and the father of her youngest three children maintained more than one romantic relationship when he was involved with Alejandra. I knew that Alejandra struggled with many of the outcomes of poverty, gender, and structural violence (lack of documentation, poor health, difficulty finding and maintaining work). Finally, Alejandra had three children in her household: two boys who were 17/18 and 14/15 and an adolescent daughter who was 15/16 during the year I conducted fieldwork. Alejandra's family structure provided me with a window to understand both the perspective of a single primary caregiver trying to support and keep her family safe—and guide her adolescent daughter—and also to understand the process through which mother and daughter negotiated competing beliefs. I spent at least two hours, five days a week in Alejandra's household during the nine months I conducted this extended case study. Our routine involved my coming to Alejandra's house before her children came home from school to help with the daily preparation of the main afternoon meal. I would then eat, talk and listen with the family during the afternoon meal. Subsequently, I would spend time with Alejandra and Marilyn watching the afternoon novellas (Spanish soap operas) if the electricity was working in the batey. As Alejandra's youngest son and Marilyn became more accustomed to my presence they would venture to my household, often to take a break when Alejandra was upset with them and things became too tense in their

home. This provided additional opportunities to explore Marilyn's perceptions about her relationship with Alejandra and how Marilyn understood and managed Alejandra's fears and resistance towards Marilyn dating and potentially becoming pregnant.

Through the use of semi-structured generational interviews, in-depth, life history interviews, and an extended case study, I explored factors that impact values and decisions regarding adolescent pregnancy. Living in a batey also aided me in understanding the unspoken experiences of adolescent females and their families and how beliefs about the best time to become a mother play out in everyday life. Ethnographic immersion into batey life was particularly critical for this study because of the sensitive nature of topics related to womanhood and motherhood, like sex, family planning choices/options, and family violence (Shweder, 1997). Participant observation also facilitated exposure to factors that impact beliefs and practices surrounding womanhood, but take place outside the public sphere and therefore may not be revealed in interviews or other participatory methods. I used extensive note taking to document field observations.

## **Data Analysis**

Modified grounded theory guided my analysis to study emergent data that arose from interviews, the extended case study and participant observations. Modified grounded theory allows systematic integration of data through an emergent process for conducting inquiry (Charmez, 2006). All analysis was conducted in Spanish. After the transcription of audio recordings, I developed a codebook based on thematic coding of interviews. As I worked my way through interview transcripts, case study notes and field notes, some codes became less

salient and were dropped and I developed the final codebook. I used Atlas.ti data management software to code and manage all data sources.

I first used open coding to conceptualize and categorize the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding involves labeling the most salient themes that initially emerge from the data. These codes were organized to create a provisional coding scheme. Open codes emerged inductively from the transcripts and were named using the language of transcripts. Next, I engaged in focused coding using the provisional coding scheme. The goal of focused coding is to refine, revise and confirm codes initially identified through open coding. Through the process of focused coding, existing codes were revised, collapsed and deleted. By applying a modified grounded theory approach, patterns, themes and categories began to emerge from the data. These patterns allowed me to compare themes and consider under what situational conditions (e.g. when, why and how) themes occurred within the text. Through constant comparison while coding, the number of concepts and their accompanying indicators were identified and linked. When additional indicators to those already grouped under a concept did not generate new insights, I considered the concept theoretically saturated and the coding scheme final. Once the final coding scheme was identified and applied to transcripts and data, I then engaged in a process of analyzing and comparing codes and the themes codes represented between my sources of data. This allowed me to engage in a nuanced discussion of not only the most important themes to participants, but also the spaces and contexts through which data was revealed during the course of fieldwork.

Below, I present findings from my fieldwork in five sections. In the first section, I present participants' narratives about the economic realities of the bateyes, and how the economy of the batey has shifted in the past twenty years. This provides insight into the reality in which females



of Haitian descent currently navigate, and how economics impacts opportunities like education, employment and the ability to support oneself independent of a tightly knit filial network. Next, I share how different generations of females of Haitian descent describe the batey historically as a social setting and perceptions of how the bateyes as communities have changed and continue to change. This leads to the third section which involves safety and risk for females living in the bateyes. Participants across generations spontaneously shared stories of gender based violence as part of their life histories, and I analyze these histories as a mechanism to illustrate the deep and urgent concern that older generations of women express for adolescent females. The fourth section explores how generations of females living in the bateyes perceive educational opportunities for girls and women today, and how those perceptions about educational opportunities, and their connection to employment and wages, impacts beliefs about best timing to enter marriage and motherhood. Finally, I share data that directly speaks to the question of best pathways to womanhood and how perceptions about routes to adulthood converge and diverge across generations of females of Haitian descent living in the bateyes. The data I present are extracted primarily from the life history interviews and also excerpted from my field notes and case study notes. These five sections bring together the multitude of obstacles that females must navigate from a very young age and together inform why some pathways to womanhood (i.e. motherhood and marriage) might seem like more realistic choices and opportunities compared to delaying motherhood indefinitely to attempt to attain seemingly ephemeral education and professional work opportunities.

## CHAPTER V: SHIFTS IN THE BATEY ECONOMY

### **Economic Life Prior to the Decline of the Sugar Cane Economy**

Women 46 and older universally describe a deteriorating economic situation for the people of the bateyes. These women discuss a tri-part series of events—the closure of sugar cane production in bateyes Chiquito and Sonrisa in 1997, the closure of the Ingenio (sugar processing plant) in 1998, the dramatic reduction in land available to individual families for subsistence farming and an ongoing phenomenon of increasing inflation of basic goods and services that outpaces real wages—that have significantly diminished the economic resources of women and families living in batey communities.

Prior to 1999, the sugar cane industry was the primary source of income for working age males and females in the bateyes. While men worked in occupations directly related to cane production and transport—planting, cutting, managing oxen used to haul loads of cane to trucks—women earned money from allied work—washing and cooking for male cane workers, cleaning for bosses. Grandmothers reported that in some cases women also worked in the direct production of sugar cane, although these cases were rare. All the women I spoke with acknowledged the harsh conditions of the cane industry:

Esmeralda: Bueno cuando yo era niña la cosa era difícil a veces, porque a veces eran las 4 o 5 de la tarde y la gente aún no había comido. Sí, había que hacer trabajos difíciles ir a comprar colmado con vales, hacer filas, un papelito y le daban, esa persona trabajaba y tenía que ir a comprar...

IS: ¿En la caña?

Esmeralda: En la caña, halando \*\*\* y cuando llegaba el horario de la tarde uno tenía que ir a gastar ese valecito, entonces era entre 3 y 4 que la persona estaba comiendo, porque eran difíciles los cuartos, había que hacer cualquier tipo de trabajo, limpiar caña, jalar caña...

Esmeralda: Well, when I was little things were difficult sometimes it was 4 or 5 pm and people had not eaten yet. Yes, there were difficult jobs to do, go to the grocery store to buy food with a candle, and being on line waiting with the voucher that the people who worked had to use to buy...

IS: In the cane?

Esmeralda: In the cane, pulling \*\*\* and when the afternoon's hours came they had to go to spend that voucher, then it was between 3 and 4 when people would eat because the money was difficult, people had to do any kind of work, cleaning cane, dragging cane...

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IS: Entonces lo vivía todo. Entonces usted me dice que cuando usted era niña, su papa trabajaba de la caña, su mama domestica criando muchos muchachos.

Mirna: En la casa esperando que el marido llegara con un valecito de 6 pesos para irlo a gastar allá a Matamamon que había un colmado, para gastar los valecitos.

IS: ¿Tenía que ir a Matamamon al colmado?

Mirna: A pie, por la línea.

IS: ¿A pie?

Mirna: A las 2 o 3 de la tarde para uno comer, todo eso lo pase yo.

IS: ¿Y le pagaban a su papa en cuartos o le daban papelitos?

Mirna: Con un recibo, le daban papelito y con ese recibo uno lo iba a gastar a un colmado, entonces uno dejaba el recibo ahí, y cuando llegaba la quincena ellos cobraban su recibo, lo que llevaba la gente para la comida.

IS: ¿Y usted vivía en una casita de madera?

Mirna: Sí, una casita de madera con el piso de tierra.

IS: ¿Y cuantas habitaciones había para todos ustedes?

Mirna: Nada más había centro, sala y un cuarto.

IS: ¿Y 7 gentes compartiendo?

Mirna: En esa sola casa ahí.

IS: ¿Y la agua, tenía que llevarla de lejos?

Mirna: Uh, el agua teníamos que ir a buscar a un manantial, lejísimos, con una lata en la cabeza, o al río, o para acá había un manantial, ahí íbamos nosotras.

IS: So you lived altogether. So you tell me that when you were a girl your father worked in the cane, and your mom was at home raising lot of children.

Mirna: At home waiting for her husband to with a voucher for 6 pesos, then go to spend it in Matamamon where there was a company store that would accept the bond.

IS: You had to go to Matamamon to the store?

Mirna: On foot.

IS: By walking?

Mirna: At 2 or 3 in the afternoon in order to eat, I've gone through many things.

IS: And they paid to your dad gave him money or a voucher?

Mirna: With a receipt, they gave him a voucher and with the receipt someone went to spend it at store, then people kept the receipt there, and each 15 days you had to pay the total [with a voucher] for the food people consumed.

IS: And you lived in a small wooden house?

Mirna: Yes, a small wooden house with a dirt floor.

IS: And how many rooms were there for all of you?

Mirna: Only was a central room [for cooking], living room and a bedroom.

IS: With 7 people sharing?

Mirna: There in that single house.

IS: And the water had to carry from far?

Mirna: Uh, the water we had to carry from a well, very far, with a can on the head, or from the river, or over here was a wellspring, where we went.

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IS: OK. ¿Y cuando usted llevo a Naranjo a los 12 años como era Naranjo en ese tiempo?

Paloma: Mal. No había camino ni nada. Había cana por todos partes. Cana, cana. No había ni casa casi.

IS: ¿Y todo el mundo vivían de la caña?

Paloma: De la caña.

IS: ¿Y la vida era duro en ese tiempo trabajando de cana?

Paloma: Trabajando de cana era mejor.

IS: ¿Cómo?

Paloma: Siempre había trabajo. Todo el mundo trabajaba. Mujeres, hombres, niños, todo el mundo trabajando.

IS: ¿Aunque pagaban muy poco?

Paloma: Poco pero había comida.

IS: OK, and then when you got to Naranjo at 12 years old how was Naranjo at that time?

Paloma: Bad, There wasn't a road or anything. There was cane everywhere. Cane, cane. There were almost no houses.

IS: And everyone lived from the cane?

Paloma: From the cane.

IS: Was life hard at that time working cane?

Paloma: Working cane was better.

IS: How?

Paloma: There always was work. Everyone worked: Women, men, children, everyone working.

IS: Although paid very little?

Paloma: Little but there was food

Despite backbreaking work that older generations describe, they also consistently comment on a certain stability that accompanied the cane economy. Women historically would supplement household economies by selling homemade sweets, peanuts and other confectionaries, but today the market for these types of products have dried up (something I have witnessed over the last decade), removing one more source of income for batey households. Life was difficult during the era of cane production, but there was some predictability and therefore families were in better positions to plan for their household economy than they are today, where work for most people in the bateyes is scarce and infrequent.

Raquel: Si, se pasaba hambre, pero no tanto, porque ahora no hay trabajo, cualquier cosita que usted ponía ahí a freír, cualquier cosita se le vendía, pero ahora uno hace un chin de dulces y le dura 3, 4, 5 días que no se vende, y usted no hace gran cosa, lo que usted hace son 200 o 300 pesos de dulce, y me dura ahí un paquetón de días, a veces yo se lo doy a los muchachos, cuando ellos viene y ,e dicen "mama yo tengo hambre" "cojan un dulce de esos, mis hijos" Eso no es negocio

IS: No. Y en el tiempo muerto, en el tiempo atrás cuando no había caña...

Raquel: Cuando no había empleo que no cerraban la zafra, cada gente iba que no tenía conuco, iban al campo de caña y cogían caña, hacían guarapo y venían y lo hervían, buscaban hojitas de hierve calentura y eso era lo que uno hacía para darle a cada muchacho un jarro... Con el pan que uno hace, si no se le vende, uno les daba un jarro de ese té y el pan, eso comíamos y nos acostábamos

IS: ¿Es verdad?

Raquel: Si, pero mi mama tenía conuco, buscábamos batata, yuca, y veníamos y lo sancochaban y hacíamos el té y nos 7 lo comíamos

Raquel: Yes we went hungry, but not as much as we do now, because now there is no work. Before any little thing that you fried, any little thing you could sell, but now you make a little bit of sweets and they last three, four, five days without selling, and you don't make a lot. What you get is 200 or 300 pesos of sweets and they last me a lot of days. Sometimes I give it to the boys when they come and say "mama I'm hungry", "have one of those sweet, my children," that is not business.

IS: No. And in the dead time, the time when there was not cane...

Raquel: When there was not employment because the harvest close, each people who had not conuco went to the cane field and found cane, made guarapo [drink] they would boil it, find leaves to boil and that was what people did, gave each child a pitcher [to drink]... With bread people would make, if it didn't sell, you would give a pitcher with the bread. It was what we ate and we would go to bed

IS: Is right?

Raquel: Yes, but my mom had conuco, we would get sweet potatoes, yucca, and we came and boiled them, and we made tea and all seven of us ate.

Despite the real challenges people of the bateyes contended with under the sugar economy, grandmothers describe the current economic reality of the batey as more difficult with fewer opportunities to consistently provide for the basic needs of family. Belkis, a fifty two year old grandmother and community leader spent years working in both the sugar and coffee economies. She explained that while life was particularly difficult during “los tiempos muertos” or, “the dead seasons”—when families would essentially only earn enough to eat—during the harvest families could at least save small sums of money that could be used for purchases other than food. From Belkis’ perspective saving money as a woman is much more challenging since the decline of sugar production in the bateyes. A fragile economic tie existed between cane workers who could purchase food, pay for clothing to be laundered, etc. from women in the bateyes. As employment opportunities for poor men in the DR have become increasingly scarce, women find it more difficult to earn money to help support their families from within the bateyes.

Belkis: Si, fue difícil, en verdad fue difícil, pero el tiempo que estamos viviendo ahora no se compara con los tiempos muertos de antes, más vale un tiempo muerto de antes que los tiempos muertos de ahora, porque en un tiempo muerto, ya después que terminaba el cultivo de la caña lo que se hacía era desyerbar, cultivar la caña, sembrar, entonces en esa época si se sentía duro, porque era un momento en el que tu trabajabas solo para la comida, porque lo que usted ganaba no le alcanzaba para otra cosa, pero cuando comenzaba la zafra, el corte de caña,

ahí si usted podía trabajar para comida y hacer otra cosa, porque ahí le alcanzaba, pero el tiempo de ahora es más duro que un tiempo muerto del tiempo de atrás

Belkis: Yes, it was difficult [life in the sugar economy], absolutely it was difficult, but the times we are living in now do not compare to the dead times from past, the dead times in the past were better than a dead time now because in the past during the dead time, after sugarcane cultivation finished, what people did was prepare the soil and plant the cane. So in those times, yes, it was hard because it was a time when people worked only for food because what you made could not cover other things, but when the cane harvest started, there you could work for food and do something else, because it [payment] covered things, but the times we are living in today are much harder than the dead time of the past.

While fieldwork provided some predictable employment for men, women were able to consistently earn small sums of money to stave off their children's hunger and provide for other basic necessities. Importantly they were often able to do so without having to leave their children for extended periods of time. In the time of active sugarcane production many women earned income by cooking large quantities of food, both breakfast and lunch, which they would then deliver to cane workers in the field. Small children would accompany their mothers to the fields to deliver food to cane workers. In Belkis' case, she had the responsibility of noting for her mother the workers who purchased food on credit, so payment could be collected when cane workers received their wages. As an adult Belkis grew into her mother's business and began preparing and selling food to cane workers as well. She chose to follow the profession of her mother in part because it provided a predictable income that did not require her to travel outside the batey.

IS: ¿Pero usted siempre ha trabajado cocinando, vendiendo, también de otra cosa?

Belkis: A mí lo que más me gustaba hacer y que aun hago es hacer pan y hacer yaniqueque, en el tiempo que se podía vender yaniqueque, por ejemplo cuando había caña yo me levantaba de madrugada todos los días, yo freía 20 o 25 libras de harina

IS: ¿Es verdad?



Belkis: Si, diario

IS: ¡Esos son muchos yaniqueques!

Belkis: Muchísimos, uno freía 20 o 25 libras de harina en la mañana

IS: ¿Y eso se vendía todos los días?

Belkis: Sí, y en la tarde yo preparaba 2 o 3 libras de spaghetti, yo amasaba 10 o 15 libras de harina y yo no amanecía con ningún yaniqueque, lo vendía todo en aquel tiempo, por eso es que yo te digo que en ese tiempo por muy mal que fuera se vivía mejor que ahora, porque todo lo que usted hacia se vendía, porque en esa época usted pasaba por cada esquina del batey e había una fritura y todito vendía, porque una parte lo hacían e pico y pala, otra parte freían puerco, otros freían pescado, yo misma freía pescado, yo sabía comprar una ponchera de pescado, en una sola tarde lo vendía todo.

IS: But you always have worked cooking, selling, also doing something else?

Belkis: To me what I liked to do and still do is make bread and make yaniqueque; at the time when yaniqueque could be sold, for example when there was cane time I woke up very early every day and I fried 20 or 25 pounds flour

IS: Really?

Belkis: Yes, daily.

IS: Those are a lot yaniqueques!

Belkis: So many, some people fried 20 or 25 pounds of flour in the morning

IS: And that was sold every day?

Belkis: Yes, and in the afternoon I cooked 2 or 3 pounds of spaghetti, I amassed 10 or 15 pounds of flour and I woke up without any yaniqueque. I sold them all at that time. That is why I say to you that in that time however bad things were, we lived better than we do now because everything you made was sold; because at that time you went through every corner of batey and there was a fried food stall and it would all sell; because one person made pico y pala, others fried pork, others fried fish, I myself fried fish, I knew to buy a large bowl of fish and in one afternoon you sold everything.

### **Shifts in Costs of Living in the Bateyes**

When probed about why financial life is so much more challenging today women also talked about rapidly increasing costs of basic goods like, food, cooking gas, transportation and medicine. Although they do not use the language of economists, women clearly describe that inflation of costs has outpaced real wages. Bienvenida discusses how poor people find themselves increasingly left behind in the post sugarcane economy of the Dominican Republic.

Bienvenida: Porque las cosas son más caras para uno, lo económico es más costoso, entonces si usted no tiene forma de producir, hay cosas que usted no puede tener, porque si usted no produce, usted no puede llegar de bonito, si no tengo 30 pesos para llegarle el bonito, no es igual usted que va en guagua que yo que voy a pie, tu llegas a donde tú vas a llegar y yo todavía estoy en camino, no voy a llegar, porque no tengo recursos para ir...

Bienvenida: Because things are more expensive, the economy is more expensive. So if you do not have a way to produce [money] there were things you cannot have because if you do not produce, you cannot get to Bonito, if you do not had 30 pesos to get to Bonito, it is not the same as you going in a bus and me walking, you get wherever you are going and I am still on the way, I will not get there because I have not resources to go...

### **Subsistence Farming as Part of the Family Economy**

Finally, during the cane era families were often able to augment food supplies through the use of conuncos or small plots of land used for subsistence farming. The conunco has a long history within Dominican society. An agricultural society for most of its past, the conunco was traditionally a part of every family's household economy. One concession that sugarcane plantation owners would make to cane workers living in the bateyes was to allow the use of fallow lands for the cultivation of conuncos. The use of this land allowed residents of the bateyes a way to supplement their nutritional needs given the poor wages earned in low level employment within the sugar industry. A conunco might be cultivated on less than an acre of land, but could provide seasonal foods such as avocados, plantains, yucca, potatoes and peas; all of provided critical nutrition for a family's survival. When sugarcane production collapsed in

1998 residents of the bateyes still had access to unused land and continued to cultivate conucos. However, shortly after, the Dominican government began a decade-long process of first fencing off vacant land, including lands that were formally used for conucos, and eventually selling lands off to real-estate developers. This has effectively eliminated conunco as a supplemental source of food in both bateyes. For example, Alejandra's second eldest son, Andi, was able to supplement the family's food supply through a conunco that he tended for a man who was not from batey Sonrisa, but who had been attracted to the cheap price of land. Alejandra's son would spend the afternoons tending this land, after finishing his work at the cracker factory. He did not receive any cash payment for his labor, but given his family's tenuous financial situation payment of produce from the land was attractive. Esperanza explains how her family used to cultivate a conuco in the batey, but that this is no longer a possibility because of lack of access to land.

IS: Okay, ¿y usted todavía tiene conuco o ya no?

Esperanza: No, ya no.

IS: ¿Y porque no?

Esperanza: Porque ya no es tierra, todas esas tierras ya están vendidas, antes uno hacia conuco porque era del \*\*\* la tierra de la compañía

IS: ¿Y cuando usted tenía conuco robó, o le quitaban en algún momento?

Esperanza: Lo quitan porque ya esa tierra no es del \*\*\* ya, todo tiene su dueño, le quitan porque la tierra ya no era de uno, ya no era mía.

IS: Okay, and do you still have conuco or not?

Esperanza: No, not anymore.

IS: And why not?

Esperanza: Because now there is not more land, all those lands are already sold, before people did conuco because it was\*\*\* land of the company

IS: And when you had conuco did someone steal or take it away at any time?

Esperanza: They removed it because that land is not the \*\*\* and everything has its owner, it takes away because the land was not ours, was no longer mine.

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IS: ¿Y usted siente como antes? Porque, aunque aquí todavía hay conuco y a veces la gente tiene su tierra. ¿Para usted la cosa esta como más difícil ahora para la gente hacer la vida aquí después que la caña lo ha caído? ¿O las cosas son mejor? ¿Igual?

María: Para mi está más difícil.

IS: ¿Y por qué entonces?

María: Porque cuando molían la caña si uno compraba un saco de carbón para vender, se vendía y uno... Por ejemplo si yo quería hacer Joni Caki por la mañana o por la tarde yo vendía bien y uno siempre tenía el peso. Y en los conucos era se daba más... como te digo, la batata, la yuca el plátano había comida en abundancia. Ahora se le hace difícil a uno a veces

IS: ¿Y no hay tantos conucos ahora?

María: No. Porque ya el CEA vendieron la tierra. Porque mi abuelo tenía un conuco por allá y se lo quitaron.

IS: And do you feel like before? Because, even here there are still conucos and sometimes people have their land. For you things are more difficult now for people to make life here, after the cane has fallen? Or things are better? The same?

Maria: For me it is harder.

IS: And why?

Maria: Because when grinding the cane if someone bought a bag of charcoal to sell, it sold and people ... For example if I wanted to make yaniqueque in the morning, or in the afternoon I sold well and always had some money. And the conucos produced more... sweet potato, yucca, plantain there was plenty of food. Now it [food] is difficult to find it sometimes.

IS: And there are not many conucos now.

Maria: No, because the CEA sold the land because my grandfather had a conuco there and they [CEA] took it away.

The conuncos also provided a mechanism for women to help support their households without having to leave the batey. Mothers who worked in conuncos could remain physically close to their children. Often time's children would accompany mothers and fathers to the fields and provide assistance where they could.

IS: ¿Ella trabajaba en la caña?

Rosa: No, ella trabajaba en el Conuco, sembrando gandules, sembrando maíz para mantenernos a nosotros.

IS: She worked in the cane?

Rosa: No, she worked in the Conuco, planting glandules, planting corn to feed us.

Today, there is both a quantitative and qualitative difference in the amount of time mothers have in the same physical space with their children and the amount of oversight that they can consistently provide children. Locally driven and supported economies, like the conucos, no longer exist. Instead, women increasingly have to leave the bateyes for long periods of time to gain employment. As a result, they can no longer provide the same oversight of children that was possible under the sugar economy.

### **Women's Post-Cane Economy**

In the post cane economy when women do find work it typically involves employment as a domestic outside the batey. Work outside the batey can take two distinct forms, each of which impacts women's daily lives and schedules differently.

In the first scenario, a woman's time is affected on a daily scale. A woman will wake very early to leave the batey on the one bus at 6:00AM to travel first into East Santo Domingo and then through the city center. These women will then finish their daily work between 3:00PM and 5:00PM and then have to make a 1.5 hour to two hour journey home. In the second

scenario, a women may only be able to find work “con dormida” live in work, which takes her away from home (and the batey) for the week, every Sunday afternoon and work until the following Friday night. Because of the limited transportation and danger of traveling at night many women do not return to the batey until Saturday mornings. Women today have much less time to physically spend with their children and monitor them because the new economy effectively forces mothers to leave the community for work to ensure basic survival.

In the new domestic economy for women, when they are away from home for long hours or days, a mother’s income will likely only be able to ensure very basic nutrition for her children. At the time of fieldwork, the average monthly pay for a live in domestic, working six days a week, was \$5,000.00RD. To put this into perspective, during the same period I was spending \$4,000.00RD a month to feed myself and the family of four with whom I would cook daily and conducted an extended case study. We would only eat meat once or twice a week and I was able to purchase staple items like oil and rice at a better rate than most people because I would buy these items in bulk outside of the community during weekly trips to the city. The little income left must instead be invested in transportation to get to and from that job. Transportation takes a significant cut out of a woman’s wage, particularly from batey Sonrisa where a motor cycle taxi costing \$50.00RD one way is required to enter or leave the community, unless a woman is able/willing to walk 35-45 minutes in the blistering sun to get to/from the nearest bus stop. This is aside from rent, the cost of school fees/materials/uniforms, cooking gas, any basic home repairs, and medicine and doctor fees for frequent illnesses, toiletries, clothing and bus/motor taxi fare for any errands. Commercialization of products and the pressure to purchase goods that are both more convenient like store bought diapers, and also perceived to be “good” for children like formula milk also increases household costs at a time when real wages are decreasing:

Esmeralda: Sí, ahora todo es comprado, uno va a un colmado va a salir a bañar a sus hijos y le pone su pampier al bebé, pero antes no, usted no hallaba condiciones... los preparaba una harina de trigo, los preparaba, los tostaba y cuando estaban tostaditos les echábamos agua y si no había leche eso se le daba y el niño comía, pero no se enfermaban tanto, pero ahora se me enferma el muchacho y yo le digo a cualquier gente vieja "dame un té para mi hijo" y recoge una hoja, me hace un té y me lo da, pero ahora no, hay que llevarlos huyendo al médico y todo caro, todo caro.

Esmeralda: Yes, now everything is bought, you go to a grocery store and if is going out just give a bath to the children and puts the baby a pampier, but not before, you did not have the ability... you prepared [a drink] with flour, toasted and when it was brown I mix it with water and when there was not milk that was given to the child to eat, but they [children] did not get sick much, but now the boy get sick and I said to any old people "gave me some tea for my son" and picked some tea leaves and made the tea and just give it to me, but not now you have to take them running to the doctor, everything's expensive.

In essence, a single mother trying to support herself and her children on the wage of \$5,000RD cannot meet all of her family's basic needs. In and of itself this is not distinct reality from life under the sugar economy, but the amount of time women spend away from children does represent a new phenomenon.

In old age women must seek work to help support themselves. While younger generations may live close by, or even in the same batey as elders the harsh economic reality where working age adults cannot provide for basic needs, leaves elder women with the practical reality of needing to find ways to earn even small sums of money to try and support basic needs.

IS: ¿Ella trabajaba en la caña?

Rosa: No, ella trabajaba en el Conuco, sembrando gandules, sembrando maíz para mantenernos a nosotros.

IS: Eso debió de haber sido difícil, verdad.

Rosa: Sí, igual que yo, porque yo he vivido mi vida así.

IS: ¿Entonces usted trabajaba con su mamá desde chiquita?

Rosa: Sí, desde chiquita.

IS: ¿En Conuco?

Rosa: En Conuco y vino, deje de hacer Conuco y me tire a la capital a lavar, a hacer limpieza de casas para poder vivir con los muchachos, igualito, para no dejarlos pasar hambre, aunque ellos tienen su padre ahí, su padre no me da ayuda en nada, a veces cuando él quiere les da la comida...

IS: She worked in the cane?

Rosa: No, she worked in the conuco, planting beans, planting corn to feed us.

IS: That must have been difficult, right.

Rosa: Yes, like me because I have lived my life like that.

IS: So you worked with your mom since you were little?

Rosa: Yes, since I was little.

IS: In conuco?

Rosa: In conuco and when I stopped cultivating conuco and I went to the capital to wash clothes, to do house cleaning to be able to live with the children, to not let them starve, although they have their father there, their father does not give me any help, sometimes when he wants he gives them food...

### **Education Expenses: A New Financial Obligation**

Another piece of the new financial puzzle that families must navigate are the financial responsibilities that come with increased access to schooling in formerly rural communities like batey Sonrisa and batey Chiquito. When the grandmother generation I interviewed were young, six out of ten explained that they never enrolled in any school. Of the remaining four, none studied beyond third grade in their youth and young adulthood. Whether these women spent their childhood in Haiti or the Dominican Republic the common narrative was that girls were expected to work alongside their mothers, that schools where they did exist were too far to access and that poverty and school fees made enrollment impossible. While I do not question the importance and



value of secondary education for children (nor to the women with whom I work), access, cost and social reinforcement of school attendance creates new challenges for mothers and families in the post-sugar economy.

Both bateyes where I conducted fieldwork have elementary schools K-8 within walking distance. This has increased physical access substantially from the days when grandmothers were growing up. One exceptional aspect of the school administration for these two elementary schools is that over the course of my twelve years working in batey Sonrisa and batey Chiquita the school principals have always turned a blind eye to children enrolling without documentation. This unofficial policy has allowed most children in batey Sonrisa and batey Chiquita to study through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. At the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade there is a national exam that requires presentation of a birth certificate and many children find themselves unable to present this documentation and therefore cannot take the national exam and advance to high school (see chapter on education). While public school is officially free in the Dominican Republic, students are required to purchase uniforms, closed toes shoes, school supplies and contribute donations to the upkeep of school grounds. This is a financial commitment that has arisen over the last generation. Prior to the late 1980's it was uncommon for parents to enroll their daughters in school for more than two to three years. In today's public educational claimant it is not uncommon for a child to fail grades, so the financial commitment to get a child from k-8 can be upwards of ten to twelve years.

While accessing school presents a challenge (see section on educational opportunities) women across generations are acutely aware that formal education is increasingly important to attain and maintain any kind of stable employment that will pay at subsistence levels. As Alejandra, a thirty eight year old mother explains, historically a young woman could find a

husband to provide financial assistance in addition to being able to access employment independently, and with more ease, than exists in the current economy. Alejandra contrasts this with the current reality that unemployment is difficult to come by for a young woman if she does not have concrete skills.

Alejandra: Prácticamente una mujer rápidamente una muchacha hermosa hallaba un hombre que le decía cualquier cosa, hallaba un trabajo fácil, hoy en día si usted no sabe hacer nada, de nada te sirve, porque si en ese entonces tu sabías hacer y se te hacía difícil...ahora los hallo más difíciles, y las cosas más para arriba, más caras.

Alejandra: Practically a beautiful woman could quickly find a man who would say anything, [she] could find a job easy. Today if you do not know how to do anything, you don't serve any purpose because if you know how to do something [have a skill] and it's difficult... today I find it more difficult, things are higher, more expensive.

In sum, the significant economic changes in the bateyes that have accompanied not only the decline of the sugar industry, but also the restructuring of the Dominican economy as part of structural readjustment policies of the international banking and loan industry have increasingly marginalized people of the bateyes. An increasing burden of the declining economy is placed on mothers and their children. Rising costs of living, combined with decreased wages for jobs that increasingly require spending long periods away from family mean that mothers living in the bateyes today have less time and resources to care for and protect children. This is something that older generations of women are particularly attuned to. Adolescent females and young women who have come of age in the post sugar economy do not necessarily perceive these new challenges the same way older generations do because they have not lived with any other reality.

## CHAPTER VI: SOCIAL LIFE IN THE BATEY YESTERDAY AND TODAY

When discussing shifts in the social climate of the bateyes every single participant who was over the age of thirty, at the time of interview, and old enough to have a living memory of life before and after the fall of the cane economy, discussed increasing challenges for girls and young women of the bateyes. Because social lives are intimately linked with economic opportunity, many participants link negative influences and climate with the new economic reality of the batey and the shift from a rural to urban landscape. Across generations, participants discussed how the lack of structured activities available for young people in the bateyes, combined with an increase in access to the communities, through the completion of the “carretera de Samana” (a new highway between the capital, Santo Domingo and the southern peninsula, Samana), has resulted in large numbers of outsiders coming into Naranjo on the weekends to attend local discotheques. A heightened drug presence in the community has accompanied the increased access by way of this new road. When describing the batey Sonrisa of her youth Esperanza, a fifty six year old grandmother explained:

Esperanza: ...Cuando yo era niña Naranjo vino creciendo, Naranjo no era un pueblo cómo ahora, en Naranjo había mucha caña, uno vivía su vida de la caña. Mi mama y mi papa me criaron con la comida de la tierra, yo hacía muchos conucos, mi papa sembraba caña también, tenía muchos conucos, y mi mama era una señora que tenía un negocio.

Esperanza: ...When I was a girl growing up in Naranjo, Naranjo was not a town like it is now, in Naranjo there was a lot of cane, people supported their family from the cane. My mother and my father raised mi with food from the land, I used to cultivate a lot of conucos, mi father planted cane too, he had many conucos, and my mom was a woman that had a business.

Aside from the physical differences that exist in bateyes Chiquito and Sonrisa today compared to twenty years ago and earlier, women also describe differences in who populates the

bateyes today, the relationships between neighbors and community members and how this impacts interactions between people and the increasing difficulty of enforcing a mutually agreed upon social code within batey communities. Marisol, a sixty one year old grandmother discussed the rise in violent crime that takes place today in her community.

IS: ¿Entonces cómo eran las cosas aquí cuando usted esta niña chiquita, creciendo aquí en Cabrito y Naranjo?

Marisol: Cuando yo crecí en Cabrito y Naranjo, voy a decir que yo vine pequeña de Cabrito a Naranjo, se vivía cómodo porque no había tanto problema.

IS: ¿En cuanto a delincuencia?

Marisol: Delincuencia y robo y mataron y todo. Se vivía tranquilo, se vivía de la caña.

IS: So how were things here when you are lite girl, growing here in Cabrito and Naranjo?

Marisol: When I grew up in Cabrito and Naranjo, I would say that I came to Naranjo when I was little from Cabrito, you lived comfortably because there was not too many problems.

IS: With regards to crime?

Marisol: Crime and theft and murder and all that. You lived peacefully, we lived from the cane.

Celia, age thirty one, a single shop owner who has never married and has no children, discussed how in the batey Sonrisa of her youth, there were fewer negative temptations for young people. Celia links this to the fact that children were more consistently with their parents, because in the past employment existed in the bateyes, and there was more realistic hope for employment among young people in years past compared to today. Although Celia does not directly state the reality that there are limited avenues for young people to make an honest, even humble wage in the bateyes today, this lack of opportunity coincides with an increase in illicit activities such as theft and drug trafficking.

Celia: Para mí, como que la delincuencia de ahora como, ha aumentado más, porque antes uno cuando era chiquita, uno pasaba sus días jugando con muñecas, hacia cocinadito, uno como que no tenía experiencia. Uno tenía un novio, eso era un ambiente sano con el novio, niñas sin experiencias; pero ahora las muchachitas tienen tanto conocimiento, los jóvenes quieren pasar su vida sentados, pero

quieren estar lindos, bien vestidos, no van a trabajar y terminan robando, y no sé, la delincuencia cada día abunda más, porque quieren ganar dinero fácil y no quieren trabajar; pero antes los viejos sembraban caña, llevaban un muchacho para el monte a sembrar caña, los que tenían conuco llevaban a sus hijos también a sembrar con ellos, los que trabajaban en un sitio a veces llevaban a los niños a trabajar, salían muy trabajadores. Pero últimamente los de ahora, yo no entiendo que está pasando, la delincuencia esta últimamente pero fuerte

Celia: To me, the delinquency today has increased because before when we were small, we passed the day playing with dolls, pretending to cook, we weren't experienced [lacked sexual experience/knowledge about sex]. You had a boyfriend, it was a healthy environment with the boyfriend, girls without experience; but now the girls have so much knowledge, Young men want to spend their lives sitting, but they want to look good, dress well, they do not go to work and end up robbing, and I don't know, crime is more prevalent every day because they [young men] want to earn easy money and do not want to work, but before old generations planted cane, people who had conuncos took their children to work, and they grew up to be hard workers. But lately, young people today, I don't know what is happening, recently the delinquency is really, really high.

The economic pull of work outside of the bateyes has also resulted in a loss of skills that mothers historically taught to their daughters through modeling; daughters working alongside their mothers in the house or in the fields to learn to run a household for the future. Today mothers increasingly have to spend extended periods of time outside of the bateyes working to support their families. Yet, these skills are still highly valued across generations and mothers of adolescent daughters and grandmothers lament that young women from the bateyes seem increasingly under-equipped to manage a household when they first marriage. Rosa, a 54 grandmother explains how she learned her work ethic and the necessities to survive as a woman living in the bateyes working alongside her mother as a child.

IS: ¿Entonces usted trabajaba con su mamá desde chiquita?

Rosa: Sí, desde chiquita... En Conuco... deje de hacer Conuco y me tire a la capital a lavar, a hacer limpieza de casas para poder vivir con los muchachos, igualito, para no dejarlos pasar hambre, aunque ellos tienen su padre ahí, su padre no me da ayuda en nada...

IS: So did you work with your mom since you were little?

Rosa: Yes, since I was little...In Conuco... [Eventually] I stopped working subsistence agriculture and took myself to the capital to wash [clothes] and clean houses in order to be able to live with the boys, just like, so they wouldn't starve; although they have their father there, their father does not help...

While mothers today increasingly have to spend time away from children, creating new challenges in teaching and passing on prized values and lessons, older generations struggle to make this connection and instead blame young mothers for not placing enough value on teaching skills associated with being a "good" mother and wife. Alternatively, older generations place blame on today's children for seemingly choosing to be disobedient and not conform to traditional standards of behavior in the continually evolving social incubator that the bateyes represent.

Reina: Bueno en ese tiempo, sabe que las madres trataban a sus hijos muy diferente que a los de ahora. Antes sus madres les decían: "Antes tu casándote tienes que saber cocinar, lavar, planchar, todo. Y como atender a un hombre." Sus madres siempre se peleaban así por eso. Aunque hoy en día hay muchas madres que son así, la mayoría no preocupen por eso.

Reina: Well at that time you know that mothers treated their children very different than they do now. Before their mothers told them [their daughters]: "Before you get marry you have to know how to cook, to wash, to iron, everything." And how take care a man. The mother always fought for that. Although today there are many mothers who are like this, the majority do not worry about these things.

While the cane economy was brutal for people of the bateyes, there was a decided sense of purpose among those that migrated to the Dominican Republic as young men and women to work the harvest. The determination and the sense of purpose that comes with having a specific task or role is something that older generations describe as missing for youth today. With few jobs available and few positive activities to occupy ones time, many young people in the bateyes gravitate towards the excitement of bars, beer and romantic liaisons. Part of this shift also involves changes in attitudes about the role of biological parents in the rearing of children. When

asked about differences in parenting today compared to the past, Roselyn an eighteen year-old mother, discussed how historically Haitian immigrants came to the DR with a purpose—to earn money to provide for their families. Although she is not able to articulate why, Roselyn discusses her belief that this has largely changed among fathers in the bateyes today, including for the father of her own child. Roselyn brings up a tension that increasingly arises between fathers and mothers today, where fathers do not provide consistent material support for children—their traditional role. From the perspective of young women, fathers abdicate their paternal rights if they do not provide at least some material support for offspring.

Roselyn: Yo diría que en el tiempo de antes era un poco más diferente, porque en el tiempo de antes ellos eran un poco más responsables... Porque mi abuela me ha dicho que en el tiempo de antes, en el tiempo que ella era joven, mi abuelo picaba caña... Entonces en ese tiempo de antes usted sabe que compraban a los haitianos... A los haitianos los traían por acá, pero eran comprados y los ponían a trabajar, entonces eran hombres responsables que trabajaban especialmente para sus hijos. Cuando los traían de Haití era porque venían a trabajar no era porque venían a vagabundear. Ahora los tiempos de ahora es muy diferente, ahora los hombres de ahora encuentran la vida como más libre, no sé, como ahora ellos se han llevado el refrán que dice "padre no el que engendra, el que cría" Ahora ellos se han llevado de eso, por ejemplo yo tengo ese niño ahí y yo me encuentro un hombre y lo crío, ya ese es su papa, ya ellos se han llevado de eso, y no es cierto, porque lo más bueno en la vida es que cuando tu tengas un hijo que tu críes tu hijo, que orgullosamente tú puedas decir a donde quiera que salga "ese es mi hijo" porque tú fuiste quien lo criaste, pero si tu no lo criaste eso es algo perdido para ti, porque cuando ese niño salga, eso debería darte vergüenza de decir "ay no Ida no es mi mama, mi mama es Lupe" Y porque Ida no es tu mama? Ida te parió" "Si ella me parió pero no me crío" Y el que cría es el que coge lucha, el que pare no, el que pare, lo parí y ya y más nada, el que cría es el que coge lucha, y ya los jóvenes de ahora se han llevado de esto, de que engendrar un muchacho está a la luz de la vida, viviendo normal, pero no hay una cosa más buena que tu tener tu muchacho y criarlo tú.

Roselyn: I would say that in time before it was a little different because in time before they [men/fathers] were a little more responsible...because my grandmother has told me that in the past, at the time she was young, my grandfather cut cane... So in the past, you know they bought Haitians...the Haitians were brought here, but they were brought and put to work; they were responsible men who worked especially for their children. When Haitians were brought here, it was because they came to work; was not because they came to be

vagabonds. Now, today's times are very different. Now men are finding life freer [of responsibilities], I don't know, now they believe the saying "a father is the person that raises a child, not the person who breeds a child." Now they have taken that, for example, I have this child there and I meet a man and we raised him, then he is his dad, and they [men] believe that, and it is not true because the best thing in the life is when you have a child and you raise your child, and you can proudly say wherever you go "she/he is my kid." Because you were the one who raised him/her, but if you did not raise the child that is something lost for you because when that child goes out, you should be ashamed of saying "oh no she is not my mama, my mom is Lupe" "And why Ida not your mama? Ida gave birth to you." "Yes she had me but she did not raise me." And the person who raises you is the one that struggles, not the person who gives birth. The person who gave birth, gave birth and nothing more, the person who raises you struggles. And the youth today are following this, that to breed a child is the light of one's life, a normal occurrence, but there isn't anything better than having your child and raising it yourself.

When Roselyn and women across generations discuss men "raising" their children this largely involves acknowledging paternity and providing financial support. Historically both Haitian and Dominican men have not been the principle primary caregivers of children. Although men will sometimes take on these roles on a temporary basis if a female caregiver is sick, or on a more permanent basis if a female primary caregiver dies, the general norm is for mothers, or mother figures to provide the majority of day to day care and nurturing for children.

Adult women old enough to remember life before and after the sugar era most frequently describe gendered social shifts in the bateyes, in terms of social control over the lives of unmarried daughters, including the timing and place of first childbirth. All participants, 30 years and older, discussed how young women getting pregnant in their parent's household is a recent phenomenon and a bellwether of new reality for young women who have more freedom. This new freedom that comes from bateyes Sonrisa and Chiquita being more closely connected to the town of San Isidro and San Luis and also the capital of Santo Domingo. In addition, participants make connections between youth having more free time and freedom from the oversight of caregivers, who increasingly have to leave the confines of the batey for work and do so for



longer hours and periods of time to ensure the subsistence of their families (see section on economic changes). Cristina a 37 year-old grandmother who was forced to marry her rapist at age 13 explained how historically marriage was an affair between families and strictly controlled by the parents of an adolescent female.

IS: ¿En el tiempo de su mama fue igual tenía que lograr todas esas cosas para ser mujer adulta?

Cristina: Bueno, en el tiempo de mi mama, exclusivamente la niña tiene que obedecer a su mama, a los 13, 14 años, tiene un novio, ni tan siquiera lo conoce, porque este novio te lo buscaron tus papas, fue por familia, no solamente por físico, no. Entonces tú vas a conocer ese novio el día que tú te vas a casar, en el tiempo de mi mama era así

IS: ¿Y en ese momento cuando conocía a su esposo o novio ya era mujer adulta?

Cristina: Después que te cases.

IS: ¿Pero no antes?

Cristina: Ya tu ere una mujer, tu no tenías relaciones ni nada de eso, solamente aprendizaje, lo que aprendías en tu casa.

IS: In the time of your mother did you have to accomplish the same things to be considered an adult woman?

Cristina: Well, in my mother's time, a girl had to exclusively obey her mother. At 13, 14 years-old she would have a boyfriend, but she really didn't know him because your parents found this boyfriend, it was done between families, not only based on physical appearance [attraction]. Then you know that boyfriend the day you are going to marry, in my mother's time was like that.

IS: And at that moment when you met your husband or boyfriend were a grown woman?

Cristina: After you get married.

IS: But not before?

Cristina: You were a woman, you hadn't had sexual relations or anything, just knowledge, what you learned in your home.

There is a decided tension in women describing a time when adolescent female sexuality was more tightly controlled through marriage as positive and healthy for girls versus a contemporary picture of females having more choice over their sexuality and choice of partners. Ruth, a thirty year-old mother of a sixteen year-old daughter who had never experienced pregnancy discussed how the shifts in today's practices surrounding sex, marriage and motherhood have impacts of parents and primary caregivers of young women, which in part may explain the frustration and desire to continue to regulate unmarried females' romantic relationships today.

IS: ¿Y usted piensa que las jóvenes hoy están como...?

Ruth: Más adelantados que nosotros cuando nos criamos... Más joven, de 15 años, hay un muchacho que se está casando de 15 años, y ahí está con sus hijos en la casa de su mama, manteniendo dos veces.

IS: En la casa de su mama. ¿Y porque eso es, porque yo he notado que la gente ve eso como algo muy feo si una muchacha tiene hijos y está en la casa de su mama, porque eso está muy muy mal?

Ruth: Porque su mama termino casándose ya con usted, y después para criarla, y después para criar sus nietos también, criar sus hijos, criar sus nietos. Eso está más difícil y la vaina esta dura, no hay cuartos en la casa...

IS: And do you think that Young fame are today like...?

Ruth: Ahead of us [sexually] compared to when we grew up... Younger, at fifteen years-old, there is a boy who is getting married at fifteen years-old, and he is living with his children in his mother's house, [the boy's mother] is supporting twice.

IS: In his mother's house. And why is that; because I have noticed that people see it as something very ugly if a girl has children and is in her mother's house. Why is that very bad?

Ruth: Because your mom ends up marrying you, and then after raising you, and then to raise her grandchildren too, raise her [daughter's] children, raising her grandchildren. That is too difficult and things are really hard, there is no money in the house...

On the one hand, there is both an economic and social cost to a female becoming pregnant, or worse having a child while living in her primary caregiver's household (Salusky, 2013). When a female gives birth and raises a child in the household of her primary caregiver the economic responsibility to provide support for that child most often shifts away from the biological father and onto the household where the mother is living. As a result, parents and primary caregiver's have a real economic incentive to prefer their daughter's to live in the household of their romantic partner once a pregnancy is discovered and definitely by the time childbirth takes place.

Marisol, a sixty two year-old grandmother, elaborates on the erosion of social control that has taken place under the increasing poverty taking hold in the bateyes. Like other extremely impoverished settings, the con-commitment issues that accompany poverty and marginalization—violence, substance use, theft, etc. have all increased over time in the bateyes. Mothers and grandmothers express particular concern surrounding violence and that young women encounter in the communities and frequently site this as evidence of decaying morals in society. Because the bateyes are settings of transnational migration, extended family networks that might provide protection against violence do not always exist, especially for young women. Further, given most peoples' precarious documentation status within the bateyes and corruption that exists within Dominican government, the police are not a source of protection or recourse for females experiencing violence. Grandmothers like Marisol site the fact that grandchildren are less obedient and compliant in their behavior than children were, although raised by the same caregiver in the same manner, as evidence that something has shifted in society and in the community.

Marisol: Usted sabe, para mi entender lo que ha pasado es el exceso de la droga. La violencia entre familiares, eso ayuda a que se caiga el respeto, porque cuando

un joven no respeta a su mama, no respeta a su papa, no respeta a su hermano, a mí no me va a respetar. Muchas cosas que pasan yo se la achaco a la nueva generación, todo esto que está sucediendo es la nueva generación, porque yo críe mis hijos que usted sentaba aquí a hablar conmigo, y si ellos estaban ahí yo nada más tenía que mirarlos, y se paraban y se iban, y ahora yo estoy criando un nietecito por ahí que cuando hay gente ahí, el niño hace todas las cosas malas, y lo estoy criando yo, entonces es la nueva generación, porque soy yo quien lo estoy criando...

Marisol: You know, for me to understand what happened is the excess of the drugs. Violence between families, it helps to destroy respect because when a young man does not respect his mother, his father, doesn't respect his brother; he will not show me respect. Many things happen now I blame on the new generation. All this is happening because of the new generation, because I raised my children to sit here and to talk to me and if they were there I only had to look at them, and they would stop and they would leave and I am now raising a grandchild around here and when are people there, the child does all the wrong things, and I am raising him. So it is the new generation because I [the same person] am who raising him...

I contend that that the ill effects of females having sex and bearing children without marrying really speaks to the evolution of gendered structural violence, in an age of shifting economies and family structures, and are a response to social and economic inequality. The economic reality of the bateyes is such that few households can subsist without both parents having to seek work outside the bateyes. The work opportunities available to residents of the bateyes, documented or undocumented, are of the lowest rung: providing low pay for long hours and often times dangerous work. As a result, primary caregivers are not consistently available to watch over their children. This occurs in a setting where extended families have often times been separated through the migration process, which is also born out of economic need. Young females are often left alone without nuclear or extended family to provide vigilance and protection. Finally, better infrastructure and transportation means that certain groups of people have new access to enter and leave the community and batey residents have little control over this. The marriage of these factors results in a situation where from an early age young females

are often times alone, in a non-cohesive community marked by strangers coming in and out, where there are few stimulating structured activities for young females to regularly participate and where larger societal norms dictate that adolescent boys and men are supposed to romance young females from the time they hit puberty. Adolescent females are at a time in their lives when there is a biological curiosity and interest around romantic relationships and sex. This is all on top of the fact that financial necessity is great especially for young females who most likely do not have access to jobs even low paying ones. Mercedes, a thirty four year old mother and grandmother, was astute to this reality and the temptation for economic assistance that male suitors can provide makes resisting boyfriends and sex a legitimate challenge for some.

Mercedes: En antes, no era tan difícil. No era tan cara toda la vaina, todas las vainas no estaban caras. Uno, había más oportunidad, ayuda que ahora. Ahora tú tienes que buscarlo y acostarte con un hombre pa' conseguir lo que tienes que conseguir pa' darle a tus hijos que comer. En antes, cualquiera mujer, trabajaba, cualquiera mujer conseguía cuarto, dependiendo, sin acostar con hombre. Pero ahora no, ahora hay que hacerlo todo. Entonces, ahora hablamos de \*\*\* mucha lucha...

Mercedes: Before, it wasn't as hard. Everything was not so expensive, things were not expensive. We had more opportunity and help than now. Now you have to look for it and sleep with a man in order to get what you need to feed your children. Before, any woman worked, any woman got money, without sleeping with man, but not now, now we have to do everything. So now we talk about \*\*\* a lot of struggle...

Not shockingly, females become pregnant and in many cases loose social cohesion and family ties in the bateyes makes it easy for fathers to not take responsibility for their children.

Nonetheless, the young mothers are blamed for becoming pregnant while still living in their parents household and held accountable on both and economic and moral grounds.

Rosa: Sí, porque las muchachas de antes no son como ahora, las muchachas e antes su mama y su papa los controlaba, no es como ahora que los muchachos nacieron hoy y mañana están buscando hombres en la calle y vainas, yo no me críe en ese tiempo, en el tiempo que me críe fue cuando las madres y padres controlaban a los muchachos y yo no era así, y no se casaban tan temprano

tampoco, uno esperaba lo que venía para ti, no tu ir a meterse, a tirarte así de \*\*\*, no, es ahora que hay eso...

Rosa: Yes, because girls before were not like girls are now, girls from before their mom and dad controlled them, is was not like now that the children were born today and tomorrow are looking for men on the street and things, I did not grow up in this time, in the time which I was raised, was when the parents controlled the children and I was not like that, and I did not marry so early either, you expected what came to you, you didn't go out looking, to through yourself \*\*\*, no, it is now that this exists...

Older generations of women also cite social shame and embarrassment that accompanies a daughter/granddaughter having a child at an early age and/or before she is married. This norm persists despite the fact that in over a decade of ongoing fieldwork, in the bateyes, I have witnessed a majority of first time pregnancies take place outside of common law marriage. Joining households with the father of a child is one way to diminish the family shame once a pregnancy is discovered, but this is not solely dependent on the desires of the pregnant female; she has to have a willing partner.

The one institution that does seem to have some success exerting social pressure for fathers to take responsibility for pregnant partners are evangelical churches in the bateyes. When two church members become pregnant the mother's family in collaboration with the church pastor, congregation members and sometimes that father's family can pressure the two parties into marriage and joining households. This is how Mirna responded when her sixteen year-old daughter became pregnant by her boyfriend. While Mirna was not a member of an evangelical church, her daughter and her daughter's boyfriend were both active members. Mirna worked in collaboration with the churches pasture to try and ensure that the boyfriend took financial responsibility of Mirna and the baby.

Mirna: No, yo quería que el que la embarazo, su esposo, se hiciera responsable de ella porque yo no podía encargarme de ella y de la barriga.

IS: ¿Entonces ella se tuvo que mudar con él?

Mirna: Sí, para que el trabajara y la mantuviera, porque es así, uno se embaraza y tiene que buscar al padre para que se haga responsable.

IS: ¿Y cómo fue, ella hablo con él para mudarse con él o usted hablo con la familia de él?

Mirna: Yo hablé con él y con el pastor de la iglesia, porque él estaba en una iglesia, y ahí.

IS: ¿Y usted no está en la iglesia, verdad?

Mirna: No.

Mirna: Not, I wanted, who got pregnant her, her husband, been responsible for it because I could not take care of her and the pregnancy.

IS: So she had to move with him?

Mirna: Yes, that he had to work and support her because it is how it is, someone gets pregnant and has to find her father to take responsibility.

IS: And how was that; she talked to him to move in with him or you talked to his family?

Mirna: I talked to him and the pastor of the church because he was in a church and there.

IS: And you are not in the church, right?

Mirna: No.

Finally, the advent of family planning and social expectations that come with the “availability” of contraceptive methods puts increased pressure of females to effectively delay pregnancy while living in a caregiver’s household.

Mirna: En ese tiempo no había promotores nadie te hablaba de sexo ni de cómo prevenir, nadie te hablaba de usar un condón, nadie decía nada de eso delante de ti, porque eso era muy grande, pero ahora te dicen cómo usarlo, me entiende? para evitar una enfermedad y cualquier cosa.

IS: Entonces hábleme de Yuleisey, porque ella estaba en ese grupo. ¿Cómo se sintió usted cuándo ella salió embarazada, con todo ese conocimiento?

Mirna: Teniendo conocimiento de que tenía que prevenirlo, mal, yo le decía "en mi tiempo nadie te hablaba de eso, si había personas adultas hablando tu tenías que estar lejos de esa persona, tu no podías estar cerca de la conversación".

Mirna: At that time there were not health promoters, nobody talked about sex or how to prevent, nobody talked about using a condom. No one said anything like that in front of you because that was a big deal, but now they tell you how to use it [contraceptives], you understand me? To prevent disease and other things.

IS: So tell me about Yuleisey because she was in that group. How did you feel when she became pregnant with all that knowledge?

Mirna: Having knowledge that she had to prevent it, [mom felt] bad, I said "in my time nobody talked about it [contraceptive use], if there were adults talking you had to be far away from that person, you could not be close to the conversation."

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Rosa: No había planificación en ese tiempo. No había, el hospital no quería que uno se pusiera nada, y ese tiempo la comida estaba barata, había comida, pollo, carne era barata, todo era barata y no faltaba comida, un plátano valía 10 cheles, 5 cheles, te vendían 3 centavos de aceite en ese tiempo, la cosa estaba buena, por eso las mujeres y los doctores no querían hacerle la planificación a uno, decían "tú eres muy joven para hacer eso, por eso es que yo llegue a hacer todos esos hijos...

Rosa: At that time there was not planning. There was not, the hospital did not want women had nothing, and at that time the food was cheap, there was food, chicken, meat was cheap, everything was cheap and did not lack food, a plantain was worth ten cents, five cents, we sold three cents of oil at that time, things were good, so women and doctors did not want women to have family planning , they said "you are too young to do that, that is why I had all those children...

Unfortunately, this expectation leaves young women in a bind. Effective contraceptive measures are not always readily accessible. Females do not always have the requisite knowledge to effectively use them and gendered social expectations and roles make it difficult for young women to negotiate contraceptive use with partners (Salusky, 2013). Yet, young women are placed with the burden of being able to 1) resist sex and 2) if they do not effectively negotiate, acquire and use contraceptives to prevent pregnancy, although practically speaking the supports to effectively do this are not always in place.



Despite the new challenges young women and young mothers face today, there are similarities in the social expectations of yesteryear and those that exist for young women today. Specifically, women have the responsibility to raise children well, sacrifice significantly to do so.

Adriana: Bueno, para mí era diferente, pero diferente en que ella también tomó sus decisiones, porque mi mamá por lo menos pienso yo, mi mamá nada más llegó al tercero de la primaria, pero por lo menos ella luchó de que nosotros fuéramos al bachiller yo entiendo que fue porque ella tuvo una iniciativa y decisión propia de tener también la responsabilidad y de ser madura también en su hogar, eso es lo que yo pienso, porque ella con mi papá tenía más de 20 años y pico de vida juntos, porque se fue el primer esposo de ella, era su novio y su esposo y con él, él nos tuvo a todos nosotros, y hasta el día en que él murió, mi mamá y él se separaron, o sea que mi papá y mi mamá tenían como 30 años y pico prácticamente viviendo, porque mi mamá se casó con el muchacho. Entonces yo entiendo que ella también tuvo su responsabilidad, de una manera u otra pero la tuvo; ¿porque ella tuvo su responsabilidad y madurez?, porque no es decir tú coger y decir "ay yo voy a ir a buscarme un lavado a la capital, a lavar y planchar para yo poderle comprar el uniforme a mis hijos, si ella quizás no tuviera responsabilidad diría "ay no, que no vayan a la escuela porque yo no fui" O fui a la escuela llegue a tal curso y me quede ahí "que se queden ahí" Yo entiendo que no, que ella trató de dar más de lo que ella pudo, a pesar de que ella tenía sus dificultades en esos momentos, porque ahora tú hallas un motor en todos lados, pero para ese entonces tú no hallabas un motor para ir para San Luis, mi mamá incluso que mi mamá me dice, el hermano mío..., ese que vino ahí y me trajo la niña, el día que mi mamá fue a parir ese muchacho, mi mamá pasó el día entero rifando, porque ella vendía números.

Adriana: Well, for me it was different, but different in that she also made her decisions because at least I think in my mom, my mom just got to third grade, but at least she fought for us get through high school, I understand, it was because she made the decision to take responsibility and be mature in her home. That is what I think because she was with my dad over 20 plus years living together, he was the first husband she had, he was her boyfriend and her husband and with him she had all of us, and the day he died my mom and him separated; besides that my dad and my mom had like 30 plus years practically living together because my mom married him when she was a girl. So I understand that she also had her responsibility, in one way or another, but she had it. Why did she have her responsibility and knowledge? because it is not to say "oh I am going to look for work washing in the capital to do laundry and iron to be able to buy my children's uniforms" if she may not had responsibility she would have said "Oh no, do not go to school because I did not go, or I went to school got such course and left so you leave too". I understand, she tried to give more than she could even though she had her difficulties at that times. Because now you find a motorcycles everywhere, but at that time you did not find a motorcycles to go to San Luis, my

mom even tells me, that my brother... the one who just dropped off the little girl; the day that my mom was to give birth to that him, my mom spent the whole day raffling because she sold numbers.

The new challenge in part involves raising children “well” in an environment where primary caregivers increasingly have to be absent from the household and there are ever increasing negative influences to temp children and adolescents.

## CHAPTER VII: SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR FEMALES IN THE BATEYES AND IN DOMINICAN SOCIETY

Exposure to violence and safety for females living in the bateyes is an important issue to explore because it directly connects to the culture of machismo within larger Dominican society and provides context for understanding the ways in which adolescent females and women understand romantic relationships, perceive the best times to enter romantic relationships and common law marriages. My interview protocol did not directly ask about sexual violence, domestic violence or family violence. Experiences with these issues emerged organically through life history narratives. The fact that I did not specifically ask about experiences with violence and the stigma that is associated with experiences like rape, incest and domestic violence would suggest that my findings are an underrepresentation of the prevalence of violence against girls and women in the bateyes today.

Twelve participants (n=49) spontaneously reported experiencing gender violence during their life history interviews. These experiences ranged from sexual assault, or an attempted sexual assault at least once in their lifetime, domestic violence and family violence. Only one adolescent, Marilyn part of my case study, spoke of attempted sexual assaults. All of the other accounts of sexual assault, domestic and family violence came from primary caregivers of adolescent females and grandmothers.

Marilyn's narrative provides a window into the types of safety issues girls and adolescent females and the bateyes contend with from an early age. Marilyn's first reported attempted sexual assault occurred when she was eleven years-old.

Marilyn: El marido de ella una vez se puso de fresco conmigo. Cuando eso yo tenía como once años. Y mami, mami estaba trabajando y Anderson también

estaba trabajando y Francisco andaba mucho. E yo tenía como miedo de que me amenazada mirando televisión e yo llevaba la televisión y llevaba para el pocentro y me acostaba en la cama de Anderson y me quedaba mirando televisión. Y cerrar la puerta. Y el hombre fue, me toco la puerta e yo dije, después yo dije ‘quien es.’ Y nadie contestó. Y después yo tranque la puerta de nuevo e yo dije que nadie contesto. Después yo abrí la puerta y sale afuera para ver quien es porque no me daba miedo, estaba del día. E yo abrí la puerta y miré quien es y no había nadie. Después yo cerré la puerta de nuevo y me fui para el pocentro. Y tocando de nuevo. E yo salí para la sala y la puerta estaba cerrada. Yo salí y dije ‘quien es’ y él me dijo ‘soy yo Chelo’ y me y por el hoyo por debajo de la puerta me estaba pasando un dinero para yo dejarlo entrar. E yo tenía miedo.

Marilyn: Her husband [a neighbor’s] got fresh with me. I was eleven years-old when it happened. Mom was working, Andi [older brother] was working and Francisco [younger brother] was running around [in the batey]. And I was scared that I would be threatened watching TV [at home alone] so I took the TV into the bedroom and I laid down on Anderson’s bed and watched TV. I locked the door [to enter the house]. And the man came and he was knocking on the door and I said, after I said: “who is it?” No one answered. After, I opened the door and I went outside to see who it was because I wasn’t scared, it was daytime. And I opened the door and looked to see who it was and there was no one. After, I closed the door again and I went to the bedroom. And the knocking started again. And I went out to the living room and the door [to enter the house] was closed. I went out and I said: “who is it?” and he [the man] said “it’s me Chelo” and he slipped money beneath the door so I would open it for him to come in. And I was scared.

A male neighbor witnessed what was happening and intervened. He had Marilyn go to the home of her biological father until her mother returned from work. The man who had attempted to lure his way into Marilyn’s home was never arrested and although Alejandra and Marilyn’s father both warned him away from ever going near Marilyn again, Marilyn reported that he continued to live near her home, although he eventually fled the community after he did successfully sexually assault another young girl and the authorities were called.

The second experience with sexual harassment and attempted sexual assault took place during my fieldwork. Marilyn’s mother, Alejandra, was very involved in an evangelical church in the community. Alejandra attributed the church as a critical force in providing both social and emotional support since finding out about her HIV status, and also a financial safety net. The

church and its pastor had provided aid to Alejandra's family in periods of acute need. Marilyn had converted and joined the evangelical church with her mother, but after almost two years of participation Marilyn decided to leave the organization. It eventually came out that the pastor had made inappropriate advances towards Marilyn.

Marilyn: En antes cuando el pastor iba para mi casa que decía que vamos a colocar café. Mami no estaba allí. Él me abrazaba y no me gustaba la forma de como él me abrazaba. Y después yo, eso fue primero en su en su casa. Porque yo compré mis zapatillas allá. Él me fijaba e yo se lo pagaba cuando mi abuelo me daba mi dinero. Y en su casa fuimos, fuimos la prima mía. Las dos primas mía. Y otra muchacha e yo. Él me llamó por mi celular y me dijo 'baja, baja pa' aca para que me ayuda a subir unos juegos que iba a la iglesia, para subirlo en la jeepeta. E yo, yo no quise ir sola por como él me trata. E yo fui con mi dos primas, la hermana mía que estaba embarazada cuando eso e yo. Y ellas se quedaron. Estábamos toditas para ir y después me llamó para ir pa' la cocina di que para hacer un café. Después que yo fui para la cocina él me agarró e yo estaba asustada.

Marilyn: Before when the pastor went to my house [he] would say "let's go make some coffee." Mom wasn't there. He hugged me and I didn't like the way that he hugged me. After I, this first happened in his house. Because I bought my sandals there. He would sell me them on credit and I would pay when my grandfather gave me money. So we went to his house, my cousin went with me. Both of my cousins. And another girl and myself. He called me on my cell phone and said "come down here and help me bring up toys to the church in my car." And I, I didn't want to go alone because of the way he treated me. I went with my two cousins, my sister who was pregnant at this time. And they stayed. We were all there and after he called me to go to the kitchen to make coffee. After I went into the kitchen he grabbed me and it scared me.

While Alejandra did not deny her daughters claims, her subsequent actions did not empower Marilyn either. Alejandra first suggested that her daughter go back and try to record an interaction on her cell phone to have definitive proof that the pastor acted inappropriately. Alejandra explained to me that another girl in the church had made a similar claim in the past and when that girl's mother made a public grievance, the church rallied around its pastor, condemning the girl and her family. Alejandra was not willing to risk this same experience.

When Marilyn was unable to locate a discrete recording device, Alejandra did speak with the pastor, but he denied any impropriety and the issue ended there.

Marilyn: Después yo fui se lo dije a mami. Y mami dijo cuando tú hablas con él tú lo grabas para yo veo. E yo no hallaba la forma como grabarlo. E yo dije que yo no iba después iba para la casa y mami no estaba allí, la única que estaba allí era yo. Y él me abrazaba y no me gustaba esa forma. Y después yo fui por su casa de nuevo con Mulata, con una muchacha y también me abrazo de una manera. Duro mucho rato abrazando conmigo. E yo se lo dije a la mama de Mulata y la mama de Mulata lo llamó lo dijo. Y él después fue hablar con mami y después me llamó di que me pidió perdón. Di que, que ‘que si no me gustaba la forma de como él me abrazaba que me tenía que decir.’

Marilyn: After I went and I told mom. And mom said “when you talk with him you record him so I can see” But I couldn’t find a way to record him. And I said I wouldn’t go, after [he] went to the house and mom wasn’t there, I was the only one there. And he hugged me and I didn’t like the way [he did it]. After I went to his house again with Mulata, with a girl and again he hugged me the same way. He spent a lot of time hugging me. And I told Mulata’s mom and Mulata’s mom called him [the pastor] and told [what Mulata has witnessed]. After, he went to talk with mom and after he called me and asked forgiveness. I said “I didn’t like the way you hugged me.”

Nonetheless, Alejandra was relentless for months afterward trying to get Marilyn to either rejoin the pastor’s church or another evangelical church in the community. Alejandra explained a number of times that she believed this would provide Marilyn with structure and guidance to help ensure that she did not become pregnant out of wedlock. Alejandra struggled to understand when I suggested that perhaps Marilyn’s disenchantment with the evangelical church in general might be connected to her negative experience with a powerful leader within the church and therefore she might participating in a similar organization dangerous. I do not think that Alejandra was in denial about the possibility that the pastor was sexually inappropriate with Marilyn. Alejandra’s own past is marked with sexual assault that she painfully recounted to me in our interview. Rather, given the prevalence of sexual and physical violence against girls and women in the bateyes, and the fact that social networks are a critical part of survival in the

bateyes, I hypothesize that Alejandra made a strategic decision that the degree of inappropriate behavior did not rise to the level of severing ties with her church/pastor and alienating a critical source of social and economic support for the family.

Three participants reported being forced into marriages against their will. Cristina's mother forced Cristina to marry her rapist when she was twelve years-old. Cristina retold how after a boy in the neighborhood raped her, she went to her mother for help. Instead of assistance, Cristina's mother blamed her for the assault telling Cristina that she was a woman of the street.

Cristina: Bueno, estábamos en la escuela juntos, pero a mí me interesaban otros muchachos que no eran él, pero él estaba interesado de mí y yo no, y cuando él se dio cuenta que no estaba por él, el me violó. Y por esa violación mi familia lo hizo responsable, no me aceptaron más en su casa y por esa razón yo tuve que casarme temprano.

IS: ¿Y su mama sabía que fue una violación?

Cristina: Sí, porque no le escondía nada a mi mama, yo llegue así y le dije "mira lo que paso, lo que fulano me hizo" y cuando mi mama fue con la familia el sí aceptó, porque él estaba consciente de que él me quería a mí y yo no lo quería a él.

IS: ¿Y su mama la mando a usted a la casa del?

Cristina: Sí, a la casa de la mama del muchacho, ahí tuve a mi primera hija, en la casa de mi suegra.

Cristina: Well, we were in school together, but I was interested in other boys not in him, but he was interested in me and when he realized that I was not interested in him, he raped me. And because of this violation my family made him responsible [forced the rapist to marry Cristina], they did not accept me in their house and that is why I had to marry early.

IS: Did your mom know you were violated?

Cristina: Yes, because I didn't hid anything from my mom. I arrived like that and I said "look at what happened, what this person did to me," and when my mom went to his family they accepted me because he was aware that he wanted me, but that I did not want him.

IS: And your mom sent you to his house?

Cristina: Yes, to his mother's house and that is where I had my first child, in my mother-in-laws house.

Cristina's mother took the position that because she was no longer a virgin, Cristina was a woman of the streets. The only way to rectify the situation and restore Cristina and her family's good name was by Cristina marrying, in this case her assailant. Cristina's situation illustrates the way that marianista views of womanhood place an unrealistic burden on females to protect their reputations (i.e. virginity) in an environment where violence against women is normative.

Five participants revealed experiences with rape during their life history interviews. All reported being raped by romantic partners, or men that they knew. Cristina's daughter, Mariana's first sexual experience was also a rape. At eighteen, Mariana was raped by her then boyfriend. Ironically, Mariana initially told the boyfriend after the rape that the only way he could repair the damage done was by marrying her (the same expectation Cristina's parents had imposed on her years earlier). Although almost a generation passed between the time when Cristina was forced to marry her rapist and Mariana's sexual assault, the socially accepted remedy/recourse seems to have been the same. Mariana's rape did not result in pregnancy and before she and her rapist married she found out that he had a wife and children and broke off the relationship altogether.

IS: Entonces usted me dice, con el primer novio cuando tenía 18 años, usted esperaba un buen tiempo, como casi un año a tener relaciones con él.

Mariana: Sí. Incluso yo cuando tuve relaciones con él, yo no decid tener relaciones con él. Él me engaño un día vamos a decir. Me llamo tempranito y me dice "¿vamos donde mi mama?" Y yo me fui y después él me decía "tú y yo ya tenemos un año y pico de amores y tú me quieres mantener de besitos solamente y a mí me dicen que tú has estado con muchos hombres, que tu haz tenido relaciones con muchos hombres". Sí, que es que le decían que había tenido muchas relaciones con muchos hombres. Yo le dije "bueno, allá tú si lo quieres



creer, pero yo sé que yo nunca he tenido relaciones con nadie" Y él me dijo "sí, a mí me han dicho" Entonces en ese día él me forzó.

IS: ¿Entonces él violó a usted?

Mariana: Me forzó ese día y por eso vamos a decir que yo, no fue porque yo le dije vamos a hacerlo, que yo tenía necesidad de hacerlo. Él me forzó ese día vamos a decir, por eso.

IS: ¿Y usted después le dijo a su mamá o a alguien lo que paso o a nadie?

Mariana: No, yo no se lo dije a nadie, ese día yo no se lo dije a nadie, porque mi mamá no estaba ahí ese día y la que vivía en la casa era una muchacha... Pero yo nada más tuve esa sola vez con él, porque yo me di cuenta a las dos semanas que él tenía su familia.

IS: So you tell me that you were 18 when you had your first boyfriend, you waited awhile, almost a year to have [sexual] relations with him.

Mariana: Yes, including when I had relations with him I didn't decide to have relations with him. You could say he tricked me one day. He called me early and said "let's go to my moms." I went and later he said "you and I have a year plus dating and you want me to live off of kisses alone and they [other people] tell me that you have been with many men, that you have had relations with many men. Yes, they say you have had relations with man men. And I said "well, if you want to believe that find, but I know that I have never had sex with anyone." And he said, "Yes, they have told me this." So that same day he forced me.

IS: He raped you?

Mariana: He forced me that day and that we can say that I, it was not because I said we should do it [have sex] that I needed to do it. He forced me that day.

IS: And after did you tell your mom or someone what happened, or no one?

Mariana: No, I didn't tell anyone, that day I didn't tell anyone because my mom wasn't there that day and only a girl live in the house [where the rape took place]... But I only had sex with him that once because I realized two weeks after that he had a family.

Primary caregivers and grandmothers also independently discussed experiences with physical abuse at the hands of romantic partners and spouses. Women who discussed physical abuse and had multiple partners/relationships during their lifetimes, generally discussed physical

abuse taking place across relationships. Graciela, a thirty one year-old woman who did not have children, but had experienced pregnancy in her lifetime had entered three common law marriages, two that were marked by extreme physical and psychological abuse. Graciela was eleven years-old when she entered her first common law marriage to a man in his early twenties.

Graciela: Como un año duramos viviendo bien, tranquilos sin pelear, pero después...

IS: ¿Que paso?

Graciela: No lo aguantaba yo.

IS: ¿Pero usted quedo cuatro años más?

Graciela: Sí, pero en el año él iba muy bien, que no peleaba ni nada, pero un día trato de matarme, después, ya después del año, yo dije "ay Dios mío, pero que le está pasando acá, Dios que le está pasando a él" Pero también quería vivir con él, yo lo deje pasar

IS: Él dijo que iba a matarte, o el trato de...

Graciela: No, de ahorcándome. Sí, y una almohada, me tapaban la boca.

IS: ¿Y es fue como después de un año casado?

Graciela: Sí, sí.

IS: ¿Y usted se quedó?

Graciela: Sí, porque estaba enamorada de él, y entonces, estaba ciega (laughs).

IS: ¿Él le daba muchos golpes también?

Graciela: Sí y ahí merito llego una vecina cuando oyó los gritos y entro, y ahí fue que me soltó, no llego a asfixiarme. Era un hombre enfermo de la mente el, porque después dijo que era relajando que estaba conmigo.

Graciela: We spent one year living well, without fighting, but after...

IS: What happened?

Graciela: He couldn't stand me.

IS: But you stayed together four more years?

Graciela: Yes, but in the year that things were good, when he didn't fight or anything, but one day he tried to kill me, after, after that year, I said: "oh my god, what is happening here, god what is happening to him." But I also wanted to live with him and I let it happen

IS: He said he was going to kill you, or he tried to kill you?

Graciela: No, he choked me. Yes, and with a pillow, he covered my mouth.

IS: And this was after you had been married for a year?

Graciela: Yes, yes.

IS: And you stayed?

Graciela: Yes, because I was in love with him and so I was blind.

IS: He hit you a lot as well?

Graciela: Yes, and sometimes a neighbor would come when she heard the screams and would enter and then he would let me go. He didn't get to asphyxiate me. He was a sick man in the head because after he said he was joking with me.

While Graciela's stated that her second husband neither physically, sexually, nor psychologically abused her, after he separated from Graciela she remarried one last time. Her third husband was an older man. Graciela explained that while he never laid a hand on her, he would constantly threaten to harm and or kill Graciela. Graciela became so fearful that when she finally was able to leave, Graciela left him with the land and house she had paid for because she was convinced that if she tried to pursue a claim to have him removed from the home he would act on his promises.

Interestingly, none of my adolescent female participants disclosed experiences with intimate partner violence. This does not mean that it does not occur, though. Two primary care givers, Jenny and Maria, discussed their awareness and concerns that the partners of their daughters were physically abusive. Jenny expressed her belief that she could not successfully intercede on her daughter's behalf because in the past when she had spoken to her daughter's husband he became aggressive and made threats towards Maria. Jenny explained that her reticence to intercede in her daughter's relationship because her daughter, Francisca, had left and then returned to her abuser multiple times.

Descriptions of verbal abuse came up less frequently in interviews and I did not directly probe around them. Given that a quarter of my sample spontaneously spoke of physical and sexual violence it is likely that verbal abuse as a part of intimate partner violence is highly prevalent, but not reported in life history interviews.

Multiple participants discussed generally the prevalence of gender violence in the communities. These reports were embedded in discussions of safety for girls and young women in the communities and how it is increasingly difficult for single females to safely navigate their environments. When referencing an earlier interview from 2011 for a study on community

resources Fortuna, an eighteen year-old adolescent female who had never experienced pregnancy stated:

IS: E yo recuerdo desde que entrevistamos la última vez, Ud. me hablo de cómo, aquí, a veces es peligroso para jóvenes, para chicas, que a veces hasta los padres las, las atacan o puede violar. ¿Eso ha pasado a gente que Ud. conoce?

Fortuna: ¿A gente que yo conozca? No. Si, si las han violado y cosas pero no de su casa, sino de otro sitio.

IS: ¿Pero Ud. conoce un par de muchachas, jóvenes que ha tenido esa experiencia de estar violado, de una persona les ataca, así?

Fortuna: Sí.

IS: ¿Y cuándo eso pasa, a quien o donde van para ayuda? O ¿Ellas no van a nadie?

Fortuna: Algunas, porque la amenazan no van. Pero hay otras sí que cogen el riesgo y lo denuncian a la policía y se los llevan preso. Hay algunos que están todavía presos. ¿Tuve?

IS: ¿Y para Ud. eso es como un riesgo grande para mujeres aquí?

Fortuna: Sí.

IS: And I remember after we interviewed the last time you talked to me about how, here, sometimes it's dangerous for young females that even their fathers will attack or violate them. Has this happened to people you know?

Fortuna: People I know? No. Yes, yes they have been violated and things, but not in their house in other places.

IS: But do you know girls, adolescents that have had this experience of being violated or attacked?

Fortuna: Yes.

IS: And when this happened, who do they go to for help? Or do they not go to anyone?

Fortuna: Some because they are threatened don't go. But there are others that take the risk and denounce to the police and they [accused] are arrested. There are some that are still in jail. You see?

IS: And do you think that it is a big risk for women here?

Fortuna: Yes.

Ruth, a thirty four year-old mother discussed the inherent power differential men tend to hold over women in relationships if relied upon for financial support. Ruth's explanation potentially provides some insight into the increasing urgency of primary caregivers and grandmothers for adolescent females to delay entering relationships to instead pursue theoretical educational and work opportunities that could possibly provide more financial independence.

Ruth: Sí yo lo falta... Tú sabes los hombres dizque ellos están dando a las mujeres, ellos pueden hacer lo que les da la gana afuera, nosotras las mujeres que no puede hacer lo que le dé la gana.

IS: ¿Y porque es así, porque usted cree que es así, porque no es solo que el hombre lo dice eso, hay mujeres que lo hacen así también?

Ruth: Ellos están siempre diciendo eso de que ellos pueden hacer lo que les da la gana, la mujer no, porque ellos son los que le están dando a la mujer.

Ruth: Yes they lack [respect]. You now men they say they are giving women [money], they can do what they like outside, we women can't do what we feel like.

IS: And why is it like this? Why do you believe that it is this way because it's not just men that say this, there are women that also say this?

Ruth: They are always saying this that they can do what they want, the woman can't because they are the ones providing for women.

Maria provides another example of how financial support can be used to enact gender violence on women, through the extraction of sexual favors in exchange for fulfilling financial obligation.

IS: ¿Y después que C. nació como él papa estaba involucrado, él ayudaba con ella? ¿Estaba presente en su vida o no tanto?

María: Um, no tanto. Porque a veces él quería que yo volviera, tenía, él quería que yo tenía relaciones con él para...

IS: ¿Para dar lo que debido dar?

María: Si. A veces la niña no tenía leche. Mandaba decirle y él me mandaba. O si no él mismo me traía la leche y me daba dinero. Pero después ni siquiera, no

quería darme dinero yo le dije “No. Si tú no quiere, no me dé nada porque tú no me encontraste en la calle.”

IS: After C [daughter] was born was the father involved, did he help [financially] with her? Was he present in her life, or not so much?

Maria: Well, not so much. Because sometimes he wanted to be involved, he wanted me to have sex with him to...

IS: To give what he ought to give?

Maria: Yes. Sometimes the girl [daughter] didn't have milk. I sent him a message and he would send it to me. Or, if not he would bring me the milk and give me money. But later, he didn't want to, he didn't want to give me money and I said: “No. If you don't want to, don't have me anything because you didn't find me in the street.”

This type of coercion is not just limited to romantic partners. It also extends to the workplace. As mentioned in my earlier discussion of shifting economies, the need to seek work outside the bateyes puts women at risk of experiencing gender violence in the work place. Cristina explained how while employed as a domestic servant her male employer tried to force Cristina to engage in sex with him (and possibly a friend). When Cristina resisted these overtures she was terminated.

Cristina: Y después cuando iba a cumplir 7 meses en el trabajo, un día que él me dice que vamos para el supermercado a comprar y como yo era trabajadora y le tenía confianza, si él me decía "vamos" yo iba, y cuando yo pienso que él va a ir a un supermercado, y veo que el deja le supermercado atrás, porque yo conocía el supermercado donde él hace compras, y digo yo "no, a donde nos vamos" y él me dice "vamos a hacer compras ahora, pero antes voy a llegar ahí con un amigo mío" y yo le dije "lo que tú tienes que hacer, ya que tú tienes todas las cosas facturadas, me las facturas y yo voy comprando y cuando llegas tú pagas" y me dijo que no, y cuando vi que más delante bajo de la \*\*\* y fue frente a una cabaña y me quede parada. Me dice, “vamos" y yo le dije "te espero aquí" y él me dice "no, sube" y le dije "no, te espero aquí, porque tú vas a hablar con un amigo, no es posible que yo escuche su conversación" y él me dice "entonces toma, vete y cuando yo llegue para la casa no dejes que te encuentre ahí, toma lo que te debo y toma tu pasaje" entonces me paga el mes que me debía y el pasaje para poder llegar a la casa para que recogiera a los niños para que él no me viera.

Cristina: After I had seven months working [as a domestic], one day he [employer] said to me let's go to the supermarket to shop and because I was working and trusted him, if he said “let's go” I went. And when I think that he is

going to a supermarket, I see that he passed the supermarket [drove past it] because I knew which supermarket he shopped at and I said: “no, where are we going?” and he told me “we are going shopping now, but before I’m am going over there with a friend of mine” and I said: “what you should do, because you already have everything priced out, give me the list and I will go in and buy everything and when you come back [from visiting the friend] you can pay” and he said that no and when I see further ahead of the and he was in front of a cabana [room rented by the hour] and I stood without moving. He said: “let’s go” and I said “I will wait for you here [outside the cabana] and he said: “no, go inside” and I said: “no, I will wait for you here because you are going to talk to your friend. I cannot listen to your conversation” and he said to me: “so take this [monthly wage] and when I get to my house I don’t want to see you there again, take what I owe you and take your bus fare.” So he paid me what he owed me for the month and the bus fare so I could get to his house and pick up his children [from school] so that he wouldn’t see me again.”

While females are at risk of gender violence when they walk out of the batey, gender violence is not limited to intimate partner violence within the bateyes. Risk also exists within everyday life in the bateyes. As Belkis a fifty two year-old community leader and grandmother explains: if a female tries to defend herself when insulted and harassed in the batey she runs the risk of further abuse and potentially physical assault. Because male youth are seen as increasingly aggressive and disrespectful of elders, community members not in a females direct filial or support network might not intercede on her behalf even if they see this type of abuse going on.

Belkis: Yo he visto muchos muchachos que les dicen palabras obscenas a las jóvenes o quieren tocarlas y ellas no quieren les dicen palabras feas y si les dicen alguna palabra fea y esa muchacha les contesta mal, algunos hasta golpes les dan

IS: ¿Es verdad?

Belkis: Si, algunos se sienten tan ofendidos que hasta golpes les dan

IS: Y si la gente ve eso en la calle, que hay un pleito así donde un muchacho está hablando así y una muchacha le contesta, luego ella responde y el la golpea, la gente no dice nada, ¿no le aconseja al muchacho?

Belkis: Si, ellos los separan, y algunos le calman la atención al muchacho, tú sabes que hay mucha de esa juventud agresiva al que no le valen consejos...

Belkis: I have seen boys that say obscene words to adolescent females or that touch them and the girls do not want to say bad words [back] and if they [these young men] say an ugly word and a girl answers back some of them will hit her.

IS: Really?

Belkis: Yes, some feel so offended that they will even hit them [adolescent females].

IS: And are there people that see this on the street that there is a fight when a young man is talking like that and a girl answers, she responds and he hits her, do people not say anything? Do they give advice to the boy?

Belkis: Yes, they will separate them and some [young men] will calm down, you know there are many aggressive youth that aren't worth advice...

Ana a 27 year-old mother of four and surrogate mother to her adolescent sister explained how the act of being a single female in society confers risk. A single female, especially if she is not under the protection of a father figure, is vulnerable to both physical abuse, but also attacks on her character, through gossip, if she lives a life outside of her home, even if those activities are in pursuit of education and better work opportunities. At the end of the day, a single female is at risk of both physical and sexual violence, but also psychological violence by way of having her character besmirched in a way that married females are less likely to experience.

Ana: Porque muchas veces en los lugares que nosotros vivimos, vulnerables y así, cuando ven a una joven soltera casi siempre piensan "está haciendo algo raro, una muchacha tan joven, soltera, sin estar haciendo nada." Cuando vives en lugares así siempre piensan en lo peor, sin embargo en la ciudad donde vive la gente de clase media no piensan eso "ella esta soltera, está estudiando, se está preparando o se está superando." Pero cuando es un campo siempre ellos piensan lo peor que uno se está prostituyendo o...

Ana: Because sometimes in the vulnerable places that we live when they see a young single female they always think: "she's doing something strange, a young girl, single, not doing anything." When you live in places like this they always think the worst. Nonetheless, in the city where middle class people live they don't think this way: "she's single, she's studying, she's preparing or bettering [herself]." But when it's rural they always think the worse that you are prostituting or...



Given the risks that females are exposed to once they enter romantic relationships it makes sense that mothers and grandmothers want adolescent girls to delay romantic entanglements and stay close to home. Education and semi-professional work opportunities provide the hope that a female may be able to avoid becoming anchored to an abusive partner, or find herself prey for sexual harassment in the workplace. The practical reality exists, though, that adolescent females do not have structured outlets and activities to occupy their time. In addition, single adolescent females who find themselves vulnerable to both gossip and unwanted overtures from adolescent males and men in the community may see a romantic relationship as something potentially protective, especially if a female does not have strong filial ties that she can rely on for support. A boyfriend/husband can be seen as a source of protection from potential gender violence from other men in the community, although it does not mean that a female will not experience family violence in the home.

## CHAPTER VIII: SHIFTS IN EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE IN THE BATEYES

Education is often cited as an important vehicle for economic self-improvement both in international aid rhetoric and by community members of the bateyes. The histories of educational access among multiple generations of females, in the bateyes, provide important information to help capture where funds of knowledge exist/do not exist regarding the educational realities and opportunities for girls and adolescent females today and perceptions of how these realities and opportunities are (not) impacted by the timing of first marriage and/or pregnancy. The following represents the educational histories for each of the three generations of females that I interviewed. I make intra-group distinctions where relevant within generational groups. Because so many participants entered school, but only briefly as children, I define school enrollment/experience as a child as having spent at least three years attending school, the majority of the school year. While there are participants who reported attending school as children for a month or even six months, these participants essentially went through their entire childhood and adolescence without gaining functional literacy skills and firsthand experience about opportunities and challenges that exist within public education settings in the Dominican Republic.

Within the Dominican secondary education system a student can earn two distinct diplomas that have different values within the Dominican economy and education system. The first credential is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency diploma. This certificate requires both passing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and passing a standardized national exam (Prueba Nacional) that has been administered since the late 1990s. Having an 8<sup>th</sup> grade diploma is a requirement to continue onto high school.

It is also the minimum requirement for the majority of vocational training programs, both state sponsored and privately run, in the DR. Employment in the free trade zone (zona franca) also requires an 8<sup>th</sup> grade diploma and is sought after employment, particularly in batey Chiquita. While working in the free trade zone only pays minimum wage (RD \$35/hour in 2012), with long hours, overheated working conditions and exploitive salaries, it is discussed as preferable employment to domestic service and construction work by most residents of the bateyes. This is because work in the free trade zone is seen as less dangerous, less physically taxing and also because it offers a somewhat higher degree of job stability. Entering the military, another common route to employment, especially for young men in bateyes Chiquito and Sonrisa also requires an 8<sup>th</sup> grade diploma. In order to take the Prueba Nacional a student must present a valid Dominican birth certificate, if under eighteen, or a cedula if eighteen years or older. A cedula is an identity card that is the equivalent to a U.S. social security card presented with a driver's license or birth certificate. It is the only accepted Dominican identification for persons eighteen years or older in the DR. As noted in the introduction, having a government issued birth certificate does not guarantee that a cedula will be issued at age eighteen and since the enactment of la sentencia, or the new constitutional law retroactively revoking citizenship of persons believed to be of Haitian ancestry, the practice of denying individuals with Dominican birth certificates a cedula has become increasingly common. Since the late 1990's these documentation requirements have created a new obstacle for females of the bateyes trying to access formal education.

The second credential is a high school diploma, which is awarded upon completion of the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Since the late 1990's a high school diploma also requires passing a national examination. This examination cannot be taken without having a valid cedula, Graduating from

high school is a requirement for university entrance. It is also a requirement for admissions into the first community college of the Dominican Republic, which opened in San Luis, the town closest to Batey Sonrisa, in 2012. Increasingly even minimum wage jobs, like working at a grocery store or cleaning rooms at a resort require a high school diploma.

For the generation of grandmothers that participated in this research, formal education opportunities during childhood were virtually non-existent. Grandmothers interviewed ranged in age from forty seven to seventy one and the mean age of grandmothers at the time of interview was 58.6 years and the median age was 56.5 years. Six out of ten grandmothers reported that they never matriculated into school as a child (before age eighteen). Of the four women that did study as children the mean number of years spent in school was five and the highest grade completed by each of these women was second, third, fourth and fifth grade at the primary level. Only one of the ten grandmothers was functionally literate at the time of interview. Grandmothers were not more or less likely to have had access to formal access to education as a child if they were born and raised in the Dominican Republic or in Haiti.

Grandmothers most frequently cited a lack of economic resources as the main reason why they did not study as children. For this generation, acute familial financial constraints, combined with the physical distance of schools and gender norms presented the most salient obstacles to school enrollment. Although public education was available during the time period when grandmothers were children, it was not free. Students were expected to pay for school uniforms—a requirement for entrance into schools—books, and contributions towards the upkeep of school facilities. A child raised in a single headed household had almost no chance of being enrolled in school for this generation, but even in a two headed household these costs could be prohibitive. As Luz, a fifty four year-old grandmother born and raised in Haiti before

immigrating to the DR in her early twenties explained: “Nunca, no me metieron a la escuela...mi mama si nacía uno, 11 muchachos, se murió uno de nacido, de los 10 ninguno conoce letras, ni escribir ni nada, porque es pobre.” “Never, no one put me in school...my mother gave birth to eleven children, one died at birth, of the ten none of us know our letters, or to write, or anything, because we are poor.” Similar economic challenges existed for women born into the bateyes of the DR as well. Ramona, a fifty seven year old Dominican national explained that she never attended school as a child because of her family’s economic condition. “No, porque entonces ellos no podían mandarnos a la escuela, éramos muchos y muy pobres”. “No, because they [parents] were not able to send us to school. We [the children] were many and very poor.”

Even for the four grandmothers who did have the opportunity to study as children there was never an expectation that they would complete high school or even finish the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Rural schools during this era were often a single room, where “teachers,” frequently not university educated, would instruct multiple grade levels at once. In the agrarian world of the batey during the era of the sugar economy, the expectation for students at the rural schools that served batey communities was to learn the rudiments of reading and mathematics, which could facilitate better management of a household economy. As Marisol, a sixty two year old grandmother, articulated when explaining her own secondary education that spanned five years before she left school with a second grade education at age eleven:

Marisol: Bueno si me gusto la escuela, pero usted sabe, en aquel tiempo no se hacía mucho... Eso era nada más uno por aprender a hacer su nombre y cosas.

IS: Ya. ¿Entonces usted dejo a los 11 años por querer, por necesidad, porque?

Marisol: Casi no llegue a los 11, a los 10... Lo dejamos porque la pobreza era crítica, no se podían hacer muchas cosas

Marisol: Well yes I liked school, but you know, in that time we did not do much ... it was just to learn to write our name and things like that.

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IS: Okay. So you left at 11 years-old because you wanted to, you needed to, or why?

Marisol: I didn't even get to 11 years-old, at 10... We left because the poverty was critical, you couldn't do many things.

While basic arithmetic and reading skills had a certain value for females of this time, household needs took precedence. A female daughter, particularly if she was the eldest or only daughter in the household had an obligation to provide much needed household labor and childcare. As Esperanza illustrates when explaining why her single mother never enrolled her in school.

IS: ¿Y cuando usted era niña usted estudiaba o siempre en la casa?

Esperanza: Siempre en la casa, cuando vinieron a ofrecer escuela todos estaban apuntando a los muchachos, vinieron a hablar con ella y ella dijo que no, que no nos iba a mandar a la escuela... No... Yo era la única hembra en la casa y ella decía "¿quién me va a fregar, quien me va a limpiar la casa?" Cómo yo era chiquita me tenía ahí para hacer los oficios y los mandados.

IS: ¿Entonces usted siempre hacia cosas en la casa, limpiando fregando? ¿A partir de los cuantos años usted comenzó a trabajar?

Esperanza: Y a los 7 años yo ya sabía cómo se limpiaba una casa, cómo trapear, cómo fregar, lavar y planchar, yo sabía todo eso porque mi mama me lo enseño, si uno no está en la escuela lo aprende.

IS: And when you were a girl did you study or were you always at home?

Esperanza: Always at home. When school was offered everybody was registering their children, they come to talk to her [mother] and she said no, that she will not send me to school... No... I was the only girl at home and she said "who is going to do the dishes and clean the house?" Because I was young they had me there to do chores and errands.

IS: So you always in the house, cleaning and washing? How old were you when you started working [at home]?

Esperanza: At seven I already knew how to clean a house, how to mop, how to wash dishes, do laundry and iron clothes. I knew all this because my mom taught me, if you are not in school you learn this.

Esperanza's contributions to her family's labor needs outweighed the benefit of enrolling her in school. Her father abandoned her mother at an early age. Esperanza's mother had to support her three children by working long hours. This left her only daughter, Esperanza, to manage the household, learning to cook, clean and care for her younger brothers at a very early age.

The migratory lifestyle involved in agricultural work was also cited as a reason for multiple generations, including grandmothers, not attending school in a consistent manner that supported academic progress. Before the decline of the sugar cane industry many families, in the bateyes where I conducted my fieldwork, would spend the four to six active months of the sugarcane harvest in the bateyes outside of Santo Domingo. After, they would migrate to Cibao, the northern region of the DR, to work the coffee harvest. This was the reason why Belkis, a fifty two year-old grandmother, eventually stopped attending school after the fourth grade.

Belkis: Si, por eso yo lo que hice fue un tercer curso, si yo hubiera estado sentada, aplomada en un sitio yo creo que los tiempos que yo dure haciendo ese tercer curso, hubiera llegado hasta un octavo, ¿porque? Porque era tres meses aquí, tres meses allá, entonces yo nunca conseguía una nota, entonces me cambiaban de curso y era cuando yo llegaba a la escuela, el profesor veía mi adelanto, me hacían un examen, si era de segundo, me hacían un examen de segundo y me dejaban ahí, entonces cuando pase a tercero me dejaron ahí, entonces cuando me evaluaron, me hicieron un examen, me pasaron a cuarto, ahí dure unos meses, que era cuando yo tenía 10 años, mi papa se dejó con mi mama, mi papa se quedó en el Cibao, mi mama vino para acá, y a mama no le gustaba mucho la escuela, porque sus dos primeros hijos nunca fueron a la escuela [en Haití]...Entonces me saco de la escuela.

IS: ¿Y cuantos años tenía cuando la saco de la escuela?

Belkis: Yo tenía 11 años.

IS: ¿Entonces nunca estudio después de los 11 años?

Belkis: No, entonces me cansó de la escuela.

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Belkis: Yes, that is why I just got to finish third grade, if I had been sitting, stable in one place I think that the time that I spent doing third grade, I could have reached eighth grade. Why? Because it was three months here, three months there, so I never got my grades, then they changed my grade and this was when I got to school. The teacher saw my progress, I did a test, if it was second grade, the teacher made me take a second grade exam and left me there. So when I passed to third grade left me there. So when they evaluated me, I took a test, I went to fourth grade. I spent a few months there, it was when I was ten years-old. My father left my mom, my dad stayed in the Cibao, my mom came here, and mom did not like school because her first two children never went to school [in Haiti]...Then she took me out of school.

IS: and how old were you when she took you away from school?

Belkis: I was eleven years old.

IS: So you never studied after the eleven years old?

Belkis: Not, then I was tired of school.

Her family's need to move from community to community in order to survive resulted in frustration and ultimately resignation because this cycle stymied academic advancement. By the time Belkis was of the age when she could have independently enrolled and attended school without her mother's consent, Belkis had a family and children to support and care for and she did this by actively engaging in the same cycle of migratory agricultural work that had allowed her mother to support and raise Belkis.

When grandmothers discuss the value and importance of formal education for younger generations, they do so in contrast to their own limited opportunities and experiences with schooling. For the generation of grandmothers school represents hope for a better future, one not marked by the entrenched poverty these women have lived with. It also represents an opportunity that their own lives might improve, through the success of their children in school and hopefully in their ability to earn a consistent and decent wage.



Belkis: No, no no, para mis hijas yo esperaba lo mejor

IS: ¿Entonces como usted esperaba que ellas fueran mujeres adultas?

Belkis: Para mi tan pronto que se casaron.

IS: ¿Porque cuantos años tenía Fifa cuando se casó?

Belkis: Ella tenía 16.

IS: ¿Pero antes que ella se casara que usted esperaba de ella?

Belkis: Yo esperaba que mi hija estudiara y fuera hasta profesional.

IS: ¿Hasta la universidad?

Belkis: Exactamente.

IS: ¿Y usted esperaba que ella tomara ese camino?

Belkis: Sí.

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Belkis: No, no, for my daughters I hoped the best

IS: So how did you hope they would be as adult women?

Belkis: For me they married too soon.

IS: How old Fifa was when she married?

Belkis: She was 16.

IS: But before she married what did you expect from her?

Belkis: I expected my daughter to study and become professionals

IS: Through the university?

Belkis: Exactly.

IS: And you expected her to take that path?

Belkis: Yes.

Esperanza, a fifty six year-old grandmother and mother to three daughters, explicitly states how she ensured that her daughters would have the educational experiences that Esperanza never had.

Esperanza: Yo mando a mis hijos a la escuela, la mama mía no me mandaba, pero yo los mando, hasta las hijas más saben leer y escribir, ya terminaron sus cursos, ya nada más les falta la universidad.

Esperanza: I send my children to school, my mom did not send me, but I send them, also my daughters know to read and write, they finished their courses, and now they just lack the University.

Esmeralda takes this argument further, discussing her perception that there are many more educational opportunities available today for young women than when grandmothers were growing up. While at face value this is true, there is also the reality that most vocational training programs in the Dominican Republic require tuition payments and even if they are “free” there are still associated costs; such as books, materials, transportation and payment that is often required to receive a diploma, or documentation of completion. This is independent of the fact that many vocational training programs targeting low-income communities in the Dominican Republic are predatory in nature, not providing skills that will lead to tangible outcomes like jobs. Grandmothers did not often acknowledge these challenges when discussing the new opportunities that exist today.

Esmeralda: Ahora pienso que hay mucha escuela y cada día más la cosa está difícil , que una muchacha que no se ha casado que este en su casa, que se prepare y cuando venga a tener un esposo si el esposo estudia que ya los dos sean profesionales... he pensado de otra manera porque la vida está difícil y a veces que veo mujeres profesionales que salen con su esposo a trabajar, veo que tienen mejor donde vivir que uno, porque saben los dos y son profesionales... con el esfuerzo que hicieron estudiando con eso salieron al camino los dos, los veo que tienen un carro, uno sale en bicicleta y sale a estudiar, tienen mejor como vivir que una persona que no aprende, los que no estudian pasan más trabajos, el

profesional no pasa nada de trabajo, en este momento quizá no tiene trabajo, pero en otro momento se mueve y consigue un trabajo más fácil que el otro que no sabe, porque el que no sabe siempre termina poniendo una empalizada con una azada, con un machete, pero el profesional no tiene que ponerle la mano a eso...

Esmeralda: Today I think that there are many schools and everyday things are more difficult. A girl that hasn't married, that is in her house [parent's home] should prepare and when she has a husband, if the husband studies then both will be professionals... I have thought differently because life is difficult and sometimes I see professional women that leave with their husbands to work, I see that they have better housing than others because you know they are both professionals... with the effort they made in their studies, with this they both made a path, I see that they have a care, they go out with bicycles and they go to study. They have a better home than someone who doesn't study. People who don't study struggle more. Professionals do not struggle in their work. At some point maybe they don't have work, but in another moment they are able to get work more easily than someone who doesn't know [who hasn't studied], because the person who hasn't studied always ends up putting up a fence with a hoe, with a machete, but a professional doesn't have to touch this kind of work.

The generation of primary caregivers, represents a shift in the dynamics at play in determining access to school during childhood and the timing of exiting school. At the time of interview all primary caregivers ranged in age from twenty seven to forty nine, with a mean age of 37.3 years and a medium age of thirty seven years. I interviewed a total of sixteen primary caregivers: eight who had adolescent daughters, sixteen or older who had not experienced adolescent pregnancy at the point of interview, and eight primary caregivers with daughters sixteen or older who had experienced pregnancy at the point of interview. The mean age for primary caregivers whose adolescent daughters had never experienced pregnancy was 36.4 years. The mean age for primary caregivers whose daughters had experienced pregnancy at the time of interview was 38.1 years. There were no differences between the two groups of primary caregivers in terms of their educational histories and so I present them in aggregate.

Six of the sixteen primary caregivers were born and raised in Haiti. Of these five women, three had formally studied for at least three years during their childhood. Both of these women

noted that while they had been enrolled in school for multiple years during childhood there were interruptions in their schooling due to economic and labor needs of their caregivers. The remaining three primary caregivers who were born and raised in Haiti reported that they never matriculated into school as children because of their families' financial limitations.

Of the ten primary caregivers who were raised in the Dominican Republic six reported having formally studied as children. Of note, four of these six women had Dominican birth certificates when they studied as children. The other two women had their education interrupted at the point when they needed Dominican documentation to continue with schooling. Both of these women returned to their studies as adults, after obtaining valid Dominican birth certificates and cédulas. Mirna, who did not have documentation as a child was forced to exit school prior to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade (the point at which she would have had to provide a birth certificate to take the 8<sup>th</sup> grade national exam) and she reported that she was not able to continue her studies until many years later when she paid to have her documentation regularized through an attorney.

Mirna: Yo estudiaba cuando era niña hasta la edad de 15 años.

IS: ¿Y porque dejo a los 15?

Mirna: Yo estaba en octavo y tenía problemas con el acta de nacimiento...

IS: Y no pudo seguir...

Mirna: Tenía problemas, empecé dizque haciendo las diligencias y de ahí empecé a trabajar para hacer dinero para pagar abogados y así hasta que me case y lo deje  
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Mirna: I studied when I was a girl until the age of fifteen years.

IS: And why did you leave at the fifteen?

Mirna: I was in the eighth grade and I had problems with the birth certificate...

IS: And could not continue...

Mirna: I had problems, I started to do due diligence [to fix documentation status] and then I started to work to make money to pay lawyers and so on until I get married and I left.

There were four women who had achieved a national credential (8<sup>th</sup> grade or 12<sup>th</sup> grade) at the time of interview. Of the four women, two had passed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade national examination, two had received a high school diploma. All four of these women had the ability to attend school during their childhood, although in all cases studies were interrupted. It is notable that all four women achieved these milestones as adults after having children.

IS: Si, ok. Entonces hábleme de, de, no sé, de la, por ejemplo, en la escuela cuando era chiquita, ¿Cómo fue su experiencia en la escuela?

Elisa: Ya si yo era jodona, pero después, muy buena.

IS: ¿Y Ud. llego hasta que curso? Porque Ud. dejo la escuela por un tiempo y después regreso. Ah, en tercero de Bachillerato.

IS: ¿Y Ud. dejo? Y pues termine.

Elisa: Lo deje y luego termine.

IS: ¿Cuántos años duraba afuera?

Elisa: Dure unos cuantos años. Duro muchos.

IS: ¿Y por qué Ud. dejo en tercero? Porque usted casi estaba terminando. ¿Qué paso?

Elisa: Me case y entonces pues, tuve a mi hija. De ahí lo deje para atenderle a ella y entonces, después volví cuando tuve la otra muchacha

IS: Yes, okay, so let talk about, for example, in the school when you were a girl. How was your experience in the school?

Elisa: Oh yes I was difficult, but then very good.

IS: And what was the highest grade you got to? Why you leaved school for a time and then go back. Ah, third year high school.

IS: And you left? And after finished.

Elisa: I left and then finished.

IS: how long did you spend out?

Elisa: I spent about four years. It was long.

IS: And why did you leave in your third year of high school? You were almost finished. What happened?

Elisa: I get married and then I had my daughter. There I left it to take care of her and then I came back when I had my other daughter.

While Elisa makes a clear connection between putting school on hold when she initially married, Ana, the other high school graduate had a complicated path to formal education. She was not enrolled in school until age nine. Initially studying without documentation, Ana was pulled out of school at age eleven. She was the only child of a single mother who was experiencing health issues and Ana needed to work to keep the household afloat. Ana did not complete 8<sup>th</sup> grade until age seventeen. She did this while working as an overnight domestic, a job she secured at age fourteen. Once she reached 8<sup>th</sup> grade Ana had to find someone with Dominican papers willing to help her get documentation, or she could not have taken the national examination to continue high school. She was fortunate to find an elderly man who was willing to declare her as his daughter. At age seventeen, Ana's education was again interrupted after she married a man who soon became physically and verbally abusive. After three years of marriage Ana successfully left the relationship. She was able to return to school studying through a weekend extension program; paying her school fees and transportation through her earnings as a domestic worker, all while raising a child. Eventually Ana passed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade national exam, earning her high school diploma. Ana's educational timeline illustrates how the issues of structural violence (via the denial of Dominican citizenship at birth), poverty and gender violence converged in creating significant barriers to school completion, independent of the timing of first pregnancy and motherhood.

The two women born and raised in the DR who had studied as children, but had not achieved either their 8<sup>th</sup> grade or 12<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency were both literate and held unique

positions in the community. Maria is a community leader and health promoter. She works with a national NGO providing contraception to community members and organizing health workshops, in addition to managing a group of youth health promoters. Lola is a small business woman within the batey. She has a small food stall in the community that has provided her family with consistent funds critical for their survival. While the profits of Lola's small business are small, they have allowed her to build a wooden home for herself and her children, remain in the community and not have to seek work that would be physically and emotionally more taxing outside the batey (see section on labor). Importantly, Lola's small business has allowed her not financially rely solely on her husband, who has been unfaithful throughout their marriage, fathering three children with another participant, Alejandra. It is unclear what tangible economic benefits an 8<sup>th</sup> grade or 12<sup>th</sup> grade diploma would yield for Maria and Lola because they do not desire minimum wage jobs outside the batey that would not necessarily yield a greater income, would potentially expose them to harassment and discrimination outside the community and in the interim would require time away from their current economic pursuits.

The remaining four primary caregivers who were raised in the Dominican Republic did not study in formal education settings as children. Alejandra, my case study was among these women. It is notable that three out of four of these women, including Alejandra, reported that they did not have documentation as children (and did not at the time of interview), which would have precluded them from taking the national exams. Strikingly, of the ten primary caregivers raised in the Dominican Republic, only one reported that she did have Dominican documentation as a child, but did not attend school. All other primary caregiver generation participants who did not have documentation did not have access to school. As demonstrated above, documentation was not sufficient to ensure completion of even 8<sup>th</sup> grade prior to first marriage or first

pregnancy, but a lack of documentation was a common factor for primary caregivers born in the DR who did not study as children.

Women report that a lack of financial resources precluded them staying in school once enrolled. Even when a woman had the will and the time to study, distance could prove a formidable obstacle. The batey where I resided during my fieldwork is physically removed from the nearest town where there is a high school. During the time when primary caregivers would have been of traditional school age, students had to travel to this town after fifth grade to study. This required walking forty minutes along an isolated road in intense heat during the day, or paying a motor-taxi to drive you in and out of the batey (a luxury out of reach for most girls and young women).

Sierra: No pues a veces cuando uno está estudiando uno hace cosas con las amigas, ya sabe, uno se siente bien con las amigas y hoy en día hace mucha falta, pero si yo me pongo a estudiar otra vez yo empiezo ahí con las amigas.

IS: ¿Y hasta que curso llego usted?

Sierra: Séptimo.

IS: ¿Y usted tenía 17 en ese tiempo?

Sierra: No en ese tiempo no.

IS: ¿Y cuantos años tenía?

Sierra: Dieciséis.

IS: Y porque lo dejo.

Sierra: Imagínate, cosas de la vida a veces uno está estudiando y uno se descuida, me puse a trabajar...

IS: ¿Usted quemo?

Sierra: No, me puse a trabajar en casa de familia y de ahí

IS: ¿A los 16 años?

Sierra: No, me puse a trabajar en casa de familia y de ahí

IS: ¿A los 16 años?



Sierra: Sí, yo dure mucho tiempo trabajando, y la señora con la que estaba a trabajando ella si me inscribió ahí en la Charles pero a mí se me hacía un poco difícil el horario, por eso me retrase, pero después Margarita y yo estábamos estudiando en San Luis.

IS: ¿Margarita es su...?

Sierra: Mi cuñada.

IS: ¿Es verdad?

Sierra: Sí. Y después pusieron un horario que cuando eran las 6 ya estaba oscuro, entonces cogimos miedo porque había problemas, pero ahora me voy a volver a inscribir.

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Sierra: Not, sometimes when a girl is studying she does things with her friends, you know, she feels good with the friends and today I miss them a lot, but, if I start to study again, I would start with my friends.

IS: And what grade did you study through?

Sierra: seventh.

IS: And you were seventeen years old by that time?

Sierra: No, not at that time.

IS: How old were you?

Sierra: Sixteen.

IS: And why did you leave it?

Sierra: Imagine, life circumstances, you are studying and you are not careful, I stated to work...

IS: did you fail?

Sierra: No, I started to work as a housekeeper.

IS: At the age of sixteen?

Sierra: Yes, I spent a long time working, and the lady that I worked for, yes, she enrolled me up on the Charles, but to me the schedule was a little difficult, so I fell behind, but then Margaret and I were studying in St. Louis.

IS: Margarita is your...?

Sierra: sister in-law

IS: Really!

Sierra: Yes. And then they put a schedule that at 6:00 P.M it was dark, so we were afraid because there were problems, but now I am going to re-enroll.

Both grandmothers and primary caregivers describe the lack of formal education and literacy skills as a critical loss both in terms of economic opportunity and also the ability to pass on certain types of knowledge that would aid children in school success. While adolescent females and younger women did not directly discuss the challenges that accompany being the first person in a family to attend school, i.e. getting help when struggling with a specific subject, understanding cultural norms that are different within the school setting and understanding how to access post-secondary education and vocational training, they represent challenges that that the most recent generation of youth in the bateyes must contend with as the expectations for school completion become increasingly higher among primary caregivers who never studied. Ana, a twenty seven year-old mother of four, who was the first in her family to ever formally study and who eventually graduated from high school explained the most extreme challenge that a young person can face trying to navigate school in a family where no one ever studied.

Ana: Entonces para mí cuando la persona es así, analfabeta, no es lo mismo criar a un niño que una persona que si ha sido estudiada, entonces entiendo que para ella no fue fácil tampoco, porque entonces sus padres tampoco eran personas estudiadas, entonces eso es como una cadena, porque si eso no hubiera venido a mi mente, el tomar la decisión yo de decir "yo voy a estudiar" pues ella no me pone, ella no se interesa en eso porque ella no sabe que es importante.

Ana: So for me it's not the same for a person who is illiterate to raise a child as for someone who has studied. So I understand that for her [mother] it was not easy either because her parents didn't study, so it is like a chain. Because if it hadn't entered my head to take the decision to say "I am going to study" she [mother] wouldn't have enrolled me, she wasn't interested in this because she didn't know the importance.

Increasingly older generations (primary caregivers and grandmothers) hold the view that today young people have many more educational opportunities than their mothers and grandmothers and therefore should be able to resist the temptations of early sexual relationships

and pregnancy, in order to achieve future economic stability. As Alejandra my case study, who had never had the opportunity to study explained when asked why she thought it was so important that a female today to complete her education and career training before marriage and motherhood:

Alejandra: Porque hay muchos privilegios ahora, muchos cursos que las jóvenes pueden aprender y prácticamente el estudio está más fácil, porque aunque no sabe de letras tiene un sábado, puede desarrollarse y eso es algo que no había antes. Hoy en día hay más desarrollo para que la juventud madurar, mujer adulta, hombre adulto que es diferente que antes

Alejandra: Because now there are many privileges, many courses that young people can learn and studying is easier because even if you don't know your letters [to read] you have Saturday, you can develop yourself and this is something that didn't exist before. Today there is more development for youth to grow up, adult women, adult men, it's different than before.

For grandmothers, in particular, the perceived educational opportunities that girls and young women have today creates high expectations for completing secondary and postsecondary education. It is clear that older generations of women highly value educational opportunities by the fact that half of the grandmothers who did not have access to education as children consistently enrolled in adult literacy courses whenever offered in their communities. This also holds true of for the next generation of primary caregivers. Of the sixteen primary caregivers who had adolescent and young adult daughters between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, at the time of interview, eight had participated in adult education programming for at least one year. In the majority of cases this participation extended several years. Adult education experiences range from adult literacy classes sponsored by non-profit organizations to participation in state sponsored public education programs to work towards a high school equivalency. The fact that women in their thirties and forty's—who have children and in some cases grandchildren in their households, typically work long hours, when and if work is

available, and experience some degree of hunger—persist in seeking out educational opportunities, demonstrates the value school and formal learning holds for adult women.

While older generations of women evidence a high degree of value for education for themselves and their daughters and granddaughters, these women lack personal experience and knowledge about the specific challenges to completing high school for adolescents and young women in the bateyes today. Further, even if a daughter and/or granddaughter makes it through high school there are almost no structural supports, or histories of knowledge, to help that female make a successful transition into any kind of postsecondary education. Between the primary caregivers and grandmothers, I interviewed twenty-six women. Only two had completed high school. Older generations of women simply do not have experience and critical knowledge to help their daughters successfully transition into any kind of postsecondary education. Even if the knowledge exists the financial resources are not. Of ten participants who had completed high school at the time of interview only four had enrolled in any kind of postsecondary program. One woman dropped out from the state run university, USAD, in her first semester, another women dropped out of a private university she enrolled in within her first year of study. Two women were currently enrolled in university degree programs at the time of interview. One woman had been working toward her degree for a decade, since 2002, and had a year's worth of credits left to complete. The final woman had been studying towards a bachelor's degree in psychology for the past six years. She was in her final year of study at the time of interview and seemed the most likely to complete he degree in the next year because she had a steady job that allowed her to pay tuition and transportation, she was in good health, did not have other family members to support and had never experienced an interruption in study since beginning her university degree.

Young women, both those who had experienced childbirth and those who had not experienced pregnancy at the interview demonstrate a number of characteristics that set them apart from the previous generations. I interviewed ten females who had never experienced pregnancy at the point of interview and nine females, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two, who had at least one child at the time of interview. All of these women reported that they had Dominican documentation at the point of interview. Those young women who were under age eighteen were still at risk of finding themselves denied a cedula when they turned eighteen. After passage of the *sentencia* in September 2013 at least three of these participants reported that they had in fact had their citizenship revoked upon turning eighteen and seeking out their cedula. Even before *la sentencia* was handed down, the fact that all young women reported possessing Dominican documentation presents a deceptive image of what obtaining documentation looks like especially for young women whose mothers do not possess Dominican cedulas.

Bernicia and Laura present two examples of the challenges that adolescent females and their parents experience in order to obtain documentation. Bernicia and Laura were each born to a mother from Haiti who immigrated to the Dominican Republic as a young adult. Bernicia and Laura were both born in hospitals in the DR. Under the constitutional law that existed when Bernicia and Laura were born, and according to the constitution in place when I conducted my fieldwork, both young women were entitled to Dominican birth certificates at birth. They were both denied birth certificates when their mother went to declare each of them as infants. Today birth certificates are issued in hospitals in the Dominican Republic, but this is a recent phenomenon. Up until 2002-2006, hospitals issued a woman documentation stating that her child had been born in a Dominican hospital. A mother then had to take this documentation to a government office, called the *fiscalía*, where a birth certificate could be issued. Prejudiced

government workers often denied mothers who were either from Haiti, or who appeared to be of Haitian descent, birth certificates for their children, in violation of the Dominican constitution. The recourse for a parent in this situation was 1) to try to pay a bribe to a government official working in office fiscalía, 2) to hire a lawyer to undertake an appeals process which could be both financially costly and take an undetermined amount of time, or 3) pay a Dominican woman or man with legal documentation to declare one's child. This option often also requires a payment of some kind. Parents have reported to me over the years that they have paid anywhere from \$4000RD to \$10,000RD per birth certificate to have a regularized Dominican declare their child. By doing so a parent might secure a Dominican birth certificate for their son or daughter, but at a cost that has more than just monetary implications. Once a child has a birth certificate under another man or woman's name the biological parent has given up legal right to their child, no longer shares a surname with their child and often times children no longer share last names with biological siblings because when parents can afford to pay for documentation for multiple children it is often through multiple "parents". There can also be negative repercussions for school age children whose names are changed in an effort to secure documentation.

Bernicia and Laura gained Dominican birth certificates by having legalized Dominicans declare them. They were both in late adolescence and well into high school when they obtained Dominican birth certificates. Both young women had studied their entire lives under their birth names. Their new documentation conferred new first and last names for both Bernicia and Laura. As a result, they no longer possessed academic records that would allow them to qualify to take the 12<sup>th</sup> grade national exam. Bernicia was entering 12<sup>th</sup> grade when she finally attained a birth certificate and cedula and realized the dilemma with which she was faced. She had been an honors student throughout her academic career. Now she would have to redo schooling from the

8<sup>th</sup> grade on to obtain academic records under her new name. In the summer of 2009 before she was scheduled to enter 12<sup>th</sup> grade, Bernicia asked me to accompany her and speak with her principle, to see if there was any way for her to qualify to take the Prueba Nacional after the upcoming academic year. I agreed, but realized that this was a plea of desperation and a situation in which I was unlikely helpful in resolving. Bernicia's records would have essentially required doctoring in order for her to continue school without interruption. It could be a risky business for a public school administrator to undertake even if they were sympathetic towards Bernicia's situation. When Bernicia and I met with the principle of her school it quickly became clear that he was not sympathetic or realistic about Bernicia's situation. This man in his mid-50's, led a public school which exclusively served poor children, a significant number of whom were of Haitian descent. The principle explained that Bernicia had a right to register for school in the upcoming year under her new identity, but that her school records would not follow her and that it was his recommendation for her to continue studying under her undocumented identity. He stated that he would speak with officials at the Secretary of Education to see what could be done about "cases" like Bernicia's. Bernicia's "case" was neither new nor unique to the school, or the country and nothing had been done at a national level for years to rectify the situation of not issuing proper birth certificates to all Dominican children at birth. It struck me as improbable that a provincial high school principle would be able to enact this type of policy change. Bernicia would eventually repeat her entire high school career plus 8<sup>th</sup> grade under her new identity. She had her daughter the day after she finished sitting for her last exam for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade Prueba Nacional, in fall 2013. She passed with scores in the top two percent of all students taking the exam that year in the DR. Although she aspired to attend the public university, Bernicia eventually took a job in the free trade zone sewing jeans to help support her young daughter.

Laura had an almost identical experience. She obtained documentation midway through high school. Laura was in her senior year when I was conducting my fieldwork and realized the consequence of her new identity on her ability to take the Prueba Nacional and graduate. At various points during this year Laura shared the emotional lows associated with the reality that she would have to repeat all four years of high school. Laura had historically been an excellent student, but as it became more apparent that she would have to repeat her high school career Laura's performance began to wane.

Laura: ...no me gusta la escuela porque tengo un desanimo terrible

IS: ¿Pero eso es por no saber si va a pasar a la prueba nacional por documentos?

Laura: Bueno yo también creo que yo ya estoy quemada.

IS: ¿Pero tú no estás haciendo tu trabajo entonces?

Laura: Yo estudio, pero yo no estudio como estudiaba antes como en el primer semestre, porque en el primer semestre yo siempre estaba al día, hacia mis tareas, siempre me preocupaba por hacer las cosas, pero ahora estoy que nada me vale nada.

IS: Pero muchacha usted tiene que...yo entiendo, yo no he pasado eso pero yo entiendo que tiene que estar bien desanimada, pero tiene que tratar, tu eres una muchacha muy inteligente, tienes que tratar de seguir poniendo de su parte, porque como quiera el conocimiento tiene su valor, prueba o no prueba nacional, tú tienes que aprender para aprender.

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Laura: ... I do not like school because I am terribly discouraged.

IS: Because you don't know if you will take the national exam because of your documents?

Laura: Well I also think I have already failed.

IS: But you are not doing your work then?

Laura: I study, but I do not study like I used to study before like in the first semester, because in the first semester, I always was punctual, I did my



homework, I always worried about doing my things, but I feel like nothing is worth anything.

IS: But girl you have to ... I understand, it has not happened to me, but I understand that you must be really discouraged, but you have to try, you are a very smart girl, you have to try to continue doing your part because knowledge has value, national exam or no national exam you have to learn for the sake of learning.

Laura did “graduate” from high school, in summer 2013, although she was unable to take the Prueba Nacional under her new identity. She is currently working her way through high school again, through an accelerated weekend program, in addition to taking English language classes through a scholarship program.

Unlike grandmothers and most primary caregivers, 25% (n=5) of the young women that I interviewed had experienced educational interruption because they had to have someone other than their biological parents declare them, despite Dominican birth. This does not include young women who were declared by someone other than their biological mother and father before entering school, or early enough in school to not cause a disruption or delay due to records existing under one name and documentation under another name. Poverty presents a clear barrier to education for all three generations. Denial of citizenship presents an additional and at times insurmountable barrier. The sentencia has only created additional challenges to fluid and uninterrupted access to primary and secondary education.

There are notable differences in educational achievement between young women who had a child at interview and those that had never experienced pregnancy. I interviewed nine young mothers who were between ages seventeen and twenty-two at the time of interview. These young women had experienced adolescent pregnancy after fifteen and within the last three years. Their mean age at the time of interview was 18.5 years and the medium age was eighteen. All of these young women reported that they had Dominican documentation, but four reported that they

had been declared by someone other than their biological mother and father. All of these young women had been enrolled in school as children and eight out of nine of these participated had passed both the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and their 8<sup>th</sup> grade Prueba Nacional. Two of these nine participants completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and passed the Prueba Nacional. None of the nine young mothers had ever enrolled in post-secondary vocational or university programs and none were studying or enrolled in school at the time of interview.

I also interviewed ten participants who had never experienced pregnancy. At interview they ranged in age from sixteen to thirty-one, with a mean age of 19.9 years and a medium age of 17.5 years. Like young mothers, all of these participants reported that they had Dominican documentation and were Dominican by birth. Two young women reported that they were declared by someone other than their biological mother and father. All ten participants had completed 8<sup>th</sup> grade and passed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Prueba Nacional. Three of the ten participants had completed 12<sup>th</sup> grade, but only two had been able to complete the 12<sup>th</sup> grade Prueba Nacional (see Laura case above). Nine of these ten females were studying at the time of interview and the one participant who was not studying had completed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade and passed the 12<sup>th</sup> grade Prueba Nacional. Four of these women had completed post-secondary education, which ranged from vocational training to university enrollment.

The participants who had never experienced pregnancy were unique in several ways. Although the bateyes are sites of extreme poverty where consistent employment opportunities are scarce, several of these participants, especially the older females who never experienced pregnancy were successful in entrepreneurial endeavors. Five out of 10 participants were involved in some kind of long term economic enterprise that in most cases they begun prior to their fifteenth birthday. One woman, Bela age twenty-nine, was in her final year of university

studies and worked full time as a nanny to support herself and her studies. She did not have any family financial obligations and owned a small home in the batey that her mother had willed to her upon death. This placed Bela in a unique situation where she could more easily dedicate her small income to study. The fact that she worked as an overnight domestic five days a week and studying full-time on the weekend left her with little time for social interactions, or social pressures that single women in the bateyes experience. Celia, age thirty-one, was a beautician and business owner in the community and had also volunteered as a literacy facilitator over the years. She began learning to style hair as an apprentice to another stylist in the community at age thirteen. Through this mentorship and the support of her parents, Bela was able to attend trade school after completing the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, attain a beautician's certificate and slowly grow her business. As an adult she completed her high school studies, which she financed through the proceeds of her business. Adri learned to do acrylic nails at thirteen and between the ages of fourteen and seventeen (point of interview) she had successfully taken out and repaid several small loans to purchase equipment to establish a small nail salon annex beside her mother's home. While not all young women who never had a child consistently worked or owned small businesses, they demonstrated other distinctions. Nina, age seventeen, and Lucita, age sixteen, were both actively involved in softball leagues and their primary caregivers had the resources to allow them to participate in excursions and make small financial contributions, in order to be active members of teams.

While economic enterprise was a distinction between young women who never experienced pregnancy and young mothers, delayed enrollment and academic disruption in schooling was not. It is important to note not having children does not mean that a young woman today in the bateyes does not experience disruption in her studies or complete high school well

after adolescence. Half of participants that never experienced pregnancy (5/10) experienced significant disruption to their secondary studies. Two participants had failed a grade at least twice. Raised by her aunt, Filomena, who was twenty-one at the time of interview, was not enrolled in school until she was twelve years old. She attributed this to the fact that the aunt who raised her was constantly moving in order to support the family. After briefly attending, she was actually pulled out of school for several years by her aunt because Filomena and other school children fought frequently. At fifteen Filomena was functionally illiterate, putting her several years behind in her schooling. Even if her studies had not been interrupted because of conflict with other children Filomena would not have been able to progress to high school because she was not able to attain functional legal documentation until she was an adult.

IS: Y como usted, como su mama murió temprano y nunca conoció a su papa verdadero... yo sé que mucha gente tiene dificultades para sacar sus papeles. ¿Usted cogió esa lucha también?

Filomena: Bueno. Yo, en ese tiempo, luego cuando yo vine para acá, que yo estaba aquí, mi tía encont---- había una persona que llegó aquí, que estaba ayudando a las personas que no tenían papeles, para declarar. Entonces ella hablo con él y agarro y me declaro esa persona. Pero esa misma persona que me declaro, declaro a Felicia porque ella tampoco conocía a su padre, tampoco. Entonces mis papeles tenían problemas para la escuela. Yo estudiaba con esos papeles pero como quiera, yo tenía que ponerle un sello que le faltaba. Entonces yo seguí estudiando con los papeles pero como quiera yo no podía llegar a primer de bachiller con esos papeles. Resulta, lo que yo tuve que hacer, es agarrar esos papeles a un lado. Y tuve que agarrar otra persona que me declarara.

IS: And how did you, your mother died early, and you never knew your real father ... I know that many people have difficulties to get their papers. Did you struggle too?

Filomena: Well, at that time, then when I came here [to batey Chiquita], I was here, my aunt found ---- there was a person who came here and was helping people without papers, to declare themselves. Then she talked to him and that person declared me, but the same person who declare me, declared Felicia because she did not know her father, either. But my papers had problems for school. I studied with those papers nonetheless, I needed a seal on them that was missing. I continued studying with those papers, but I could not get into freshman

year of high school with those papers. Turns out, I had to throw these papers away and I had to get another person to declare me.

The beautician, Celia age thirty-one, left school for almost a decade after completing the 7<sup>th</sup> grade in part because the closest high school available only offered night classes and the road in and out of the batey is dangerous at night. She returned to school when she became an adult literacy facilitator and noted the irony of promoting education when she herself had not completed high school. By this time weekend programs were available for high school completion and Celia paid for transportation to and from school from the proceeds of her business and work as an adult literacy facilitator.

Celia: Yo me pare hace mucho, yo creo que ya tenía como 17 o 20 años, así, yo creo

IS: Entonces, ¿porque tenía usted que dejar la escuela?

Celia: Porque aquí no daban octavo

IS: Tenía que...ir a

Celia: Tenía que ir a St. Luis

IS: Y no había para...

Celia: Y ahí en St. Luis no lo daban en el día, sino era en el Liceo de noche, y el camino era muy peligroso porque atracaban mucho los motoristas...Y entonces los mataban, y uno tenía miedo de coger para St. Luis a estudiar...Y fue después, ahora hace como dos años que aprobaron aquí el octavo, y después ya en San Luis empezaron a dar octavo en el día y después también hubo Prepara, pero ya después uno, cuando tu dejas el estudio, después como que se desanima, y ya cuando aprobaron el octavo, yo como que ya me había desanimado. Fue después, una amiga mía me aconsejó y cuando yo me metí en el programa con ustedes, y...

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Celia: I stopped long ago, I think I was like 17 or 20 years, so I think

IS: Why did you have to leave school?

Celia: Because they did not offer eighth grade here

IS: You had to ... go to

Celia: I had to go to San Louis... And in San Louis they did not offer classes during the day, instead it was at the high school classes were at night, and the road was very dangerous because many docked motorists... they attacked people [on the road in and out of the batey], and people were afraid to go to San Luis to study... And it was after, it is about two years ago that they approved eighth grade here, after San Luis began to offer eighth in the day and then there was also Prepara, but after you leave school you start to get discouraged. When they started 8<sup>th</sup> grade here I was already discouraged. It was later that a friend of mine gave me advice and when I started to work in your programs [as an facilitator in an adult literacy program].

For young mothers disruption to academic studies was more frequent, than for non-mothers, and also illustrative of multiple adverse factors converging. Seven out of nine young mothers had experienced disruption to their secondary education at the time of interview. Of the nine, one young mother was studying at the time of interview and two young mothers had completed high school prior to the birth of their children. For the other six young women there were multiple factors that were cited as reasons for not completing school, including perceived discrimination within schools once pregnancies became visible, childcare issues, and financial constraints that contributed to prolonged discontinuation of studies.

IS: ¿Y cuénteme, cuando usted se casó seguía teniendo deseos de asistir a la escuela?

Isabela: Claro, yo seguía, fue por la escuela que yo deje porque no dejan que las muchachas estén casadas ni nada de eso, entonces yo lo termine y cuando termine me fui los sábados

IS: ¿Ellos le dieron que tenía que irse a los sábados cuando usted se casó?

Isabela: Sí, ellos me dijeron eso.

IS: ¿Quién hablo con usted sobre eso?

Isabela: No, es que en esa escuela no pueden ir las muchachas casadas y con hijos.

IS: ¿Pero quién les dijo que usted se casó?

Isabela: Siempre hay muchachas que se lo dicen y vainas

IS: ¿Entonces tenía por obligación que trasladarse a los sábados?

Isabela: Sí.

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IS: And tell me when you got married did you still wish to attend school?

Isabela: Of course, I continued. It was because of the school [policy] that I left because they did not accepted married girls or anything like that. I finished the year and when finished I went on Saturdays to Prepara [public extension high school]

IS: They told you that you had to go on Saturdays when you got married?

Isabela: Yes, they told me that.

IS: Who talked to you about that?

Isabela: No, is that at that school married girls and girl's with children cannot attend.

IS: But who told them that you were married?

Isabela: There are always girls who tell them.

IS: So out of obligation you had to move to Saturdays?

Isabela: Yes

Not unfrequently adolescent mothers discussed that there were limited accommodations within the school setting as a female neared the end of her pregnancy and when she had recently given birth. If a pregnant student experienced morning sickness, or had other complications associated with her pregnancy she was at the mercy of her teachers and school administrators, who might show sympathy and provide excused absences or extensions for late work, or might not. If a young women gave birth before the end of semester exams and could not present to the school for those exams she would automatically fail the year. A lack of formal policies

protecting pregnant females in the public school setting and an unwillingness of some school administrators to even allow pregnant and/or married students to remain enrolled in some public schools creates serious obstacles for adolescent mothers who otherwise might continue with their academic studies.

Even if a young mother is able to continue her studies throughout her pregnancy and initially after childbirth, the financial costs associated with attending weekend extension programs can be prohibitive. Prior to the 2013-2014 academic year, Prepara (weekend extension) students had to pay a DR \$1000 enrollment fee as well as uniform costs to attend classes on Saturday. Many young mothers were unable to come up with the fees in time for August enrollment.

IS: Yo sé que ahora usted está trabajando, ¿pero antes porque no pudo ingresar de nuevo?

Roselyn: Por el dinero, porque están cobrando la inscripción, ahora son mil y pico, y yo no tenía posibilidad de conseguirlo.

IS: ¿Y el esposo no ayudo en eso?

Roselyn: Él no ayudaba. No ayudaba ni para dar en la comida, menos para inscribirme en la escuela.

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IS: I know that now you are working, but before why could not you enter again?

Roselyn: Because of the money, because they are charging registration, now it is thousand or so, and I did not have the ability to get it [the money].

IS: And the husband did not help with that?

Roselyn: He did not help. He did not help even with food; even less to enroll me in school.

In addition to financial obstacles pregnant females and young mothers face to attending school, the negative side effects of pregnancy can make school attendance extremely difficult, especially



because most pregnant females are only allowed to enroll in Prepara, the Saturday extension high school program offered by the state. Prepara classes run from 8AM until 12PM on Saturdays. If a female student is sick in the morning of class she will essentially miss an entire week of instruction. In both my masters study and in my dissertation data collection this challenged was only the reason ascribed to exiting school during pregnancy.

IS: ¿Y hasta que curso Ud. llevo?

Reina: A primero, este año voy a seguir, si Dios quiere.

IS: ¿Y cuándo salió embarazada tenía que...?

Reina: O sea cuando yo estaba embarazada, yo iba, pero deje de ir porque los malestares me dieron demasiado fuerte. Cuando yo iba, yo no aguantaba, tenía que salir corriendo a vomitar y eso. Y no más decidí no ir porque en realidad no hacía nada, no podía. El otro año que \*\*\* no pude por el dinero. Este año tratare, voy a hacer todo lo posible para volver.

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IS: And what was the last grade you finished?

Reina: Freshman year [high school], this year I will continue, god willing.

IS: And when you became pregnant had to...?

Reina: So when I was pregnant, I was going, but I stopped going because the side effects of the pregnancy were a lot. When I went, I could not stand it, I had to rush out to vomit and. And I just decided not to go because in reality I couldn't get anything done, I couldn't. Last year \*\*\* I couldn't go because of money. This year I will try, I will do everything possible to return.

Young mothers also confirmed previous research findings, that even when a young mother has the motivation and financial resources to attend school today, childcare can become a real barrier to school attendance and completion (Salusky, 2013). Parents and romantic partners cannot always be relied upon to provide consistent childcare, either because of interpersonal dynamics or conflicting work schedules. Rita an eighteen year-old mother who had previously been an honor student discussed how her husband could

not provide childcare because he worked six days a week. Rita did not have biological family living in the batey and her mother-in-law was not a consistent resource for childcare on Saturdays.

Rita: No, yo siempre me llevaba bien con los profesores y siempre he sacado buenas notas. Y me gusta, a mí en verdad, me gusta estudiar. Lo que pasa es que ya después que uno se mete un muchacho y cosas, tonces como que se hace más pesado y dificultoso y así. Por eso es que yo no he terminado. Porque si no yo hubiera terminado, porque a mí me gusta, a mí.

IS: ¡Sí! Porque cuando Ud. y yo hicimos la primera entrevista hace tres veranos, ahora, así cuatro veranos, Ud. me dijo en ese momento: “No, yo voy a inscribirme en Agosto y que María iba a cuidar al niño \*\*\*.” ¿Qué paso? ¿Ud. no regreso?

Rita: Porque ella es por tiempo. Por ejemplo, ahora mismo está muy bien y de momento se mete a sus cosas y con de Roberto y así. Tonces, siempre estamos - es mejor estar lejos que cerca de ella. Tonces, mira ahora mismo, Ella ya no me habla.

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Rita: No, I always got along with the teachers and have always gotten good grades. And I really like, I like to study. What happens is that after people have kids, then it becomes more difficult and challenging, that is why I have not finished; because otherwise I would be done because I like it.

IS: Yes! Because when you and I did the first interview three summers ago, it is four summers, you told me at that moment. "No, I will enroll in August and that Maria would take care of the child \*\*\*." What happened? You did not return?

Rita: Because she is unstable, For example, right now she is okay and suddenly she gets involved in her things, and with Roberto, and so on, then we always. It is better to maintain some distance and not be too close to her. So, look right now, she does not speak to me.

The combination of factors (e.g. lack of documentation, financial constraints, and transportation) makes standard progression through school challenging for any young female in the bateyes, motherhood adds an additional layer of challenges to this equation because of discrimination towards pregnant students in the school setting, illness during pregnancy and childcare constrains once a young mother has given birth. These later

challenges do not alone account for delays in secondary education or completion or lack of completion of high school among adolescent females in the bateyes.

One significant distinction between adolescent mothers and females who had not experienced pregnancy at the time of interviews involves the hope for post-secondary training opportunities. For the ten females who had not experienced pregnancy, or childbirth at the interview they described a belief that not only more educational opportunities exist today, but also that access to those opportunities is greater than in the past, and that they will have more career opportunities in the future by completing secondary and post-secondary education.

Filomena: En los tiempos de antes nos cogíamos lucha. Pero entonces ahora, como le digo, estamos en el siglo 21. Es un tiempo avanzado, y tenemos--- el problema de la economía no está fácil, pero en este tiempo, ahora, tenemos como un chimba más de facilidades. Pero en el tiempo que---no la vi a mi tía cuando tenía 15 años, pero yo me imagino, que en ese tiempo de ella, que a veces ella decía, que en ese tiempo el dinero estaba escaso. Entonces y también el medio de transporte también estaba escaso en ese tiempo...

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Filomena: In the old days we struggled. But now, how do I explain, we are in the 21st century. It is an advanced time, and we have--- the problem of the economy is not easy, but in this time, now, we have a little more opportunities. But in the time that --- I did not see my aunt when she was 15, but I imagine that at the time, she sometimes said, that at the time the money was scarce; and also the transportation was scarce at this time...

A dyadic analysis of adolescent mothers and their primary caregivers as well as young women who had never experienced pregnancy and their primary caregivers reveals additional distinctions between the two groups. None of the ten primary caregivers with daughters who had not experienced pregnancy at interview themselves became pregnant before age sixteen and the mean age at first pregnancy for this group was 18.2 years (range sixteen to twenty-five years). This is in contrast to the primary caregivers of young mothers. Of the nine primary caregivers of adolescent mothers, four had given birth by age fourteen and the mean age of first pregnancy for

the primary caregivers of adolescent mothers was 16.2 years (range thirteen to twenty years). On average, young mothers became pregnant for the first time at a slightly later age than their female primary caregivers (mean=seventeen years). Dyadic analysis indicates that primary caregivers of females who had never experienced pregnancy were no more likely to have been born in the Dominican Republic or to have ever formally studied as children compared to primary caregivers of females who had had at least one child at the time of interview.

The data above indicate that differences in access to documentation, economic independence (to pay school fees, transportation costs, etc.) and educational opportunity (having access to a school within a reasonable distance) account for lack of access to school and most delays in education among all generations of interviewees. Nonetheless, primary caregivers and grandmothers discuss their steadfast belief that motherhood is *the* significant barrier to education for females in the bateyes. If education is perceived as a pathway to economic mobility then an important question is: what are the obstacles for attaining a high school degree and post-secondary education? The data suggests that significant barriers including physical distance of school, cost of transportation and a lack of documentation all contribute to young women experiencing significant delays in high school completion independent of early motherhood.

This shift in the emphasis on attaining formal education by multiple generations of women is at least in part a reflection of macro level changes in the Dominican society and economy, away from reliance on agricultural production as dictated by the terms of structured loans made by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Abbassi & Lutjens Rowman, 2002; IMF, 2013; Safa H. I., 1995)

## CHAPTER IX: PATHWAYS TO WOMANHOOD

Multiple narratives surrounding routes to achieving the role of a mature, adult woman illustrate the dynamic shifts taking place within Dominican society and more specifically within bateyes regarding traditionally proscriptive gender roles for women that center a female's life on marriage, motherhood and subservience to her husband and children. Females of Haitian descent, regardless of generation status, discuss three possible pathways to womanhood. The first, involves marriage and motherhood as the singular steps required to take on an identity as a mature adult woman. For the second pathway, motherhood is described as necessary, but not sufficient to become a mature adult woman. Finally, a small group of respondents believe that an identity as a mature, adult woman can be achieved independent of motherhood. Notably, a majority of respondents across all three generations discuss motherhood as a part of the role of a mature, adult woman, but not the sum total.

### **Motherhood and Marriage as a Singular Pathway to Womanhood**

When generations of females of Haitian descent discuss milestones to achieving an adult identity or to become “una mujer adulta madura” (a mature adult woman) distinctions emerge in what it means to be a woman, an adult and a mature adult woman. In its most traditional sense, becoming a woman is directly tied to physiological changes that accompany female maturation, culminating in first sex, which ideally follows marriage though not necessarily. For women like Esmeralda, a forty-seven year old grandmother, becoming a woman has nothing to do specifically with age, maturity or even having entered a formal union with a man. It is sexual

contact that is both sufficient and necessary in order to achieve status as a woman. Here she discusses her twenty year-old unmarried daughter:

Ella en regla no es una niña pequeña pero es una niña porque no sabe de hombres nada, cuando no sabe nada de hombres es una niña, no tiene contacto sexual con nadie, su mente no está en eso, lo que esta es estudiando, ella es adulta porque tiene edad, pero no significa ser una mujer.

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As a rule, she [granddaughter] is not a little girl, but she is a child because she does not have experience with men. When you don't have experience with men you're a child, you do not have sexual contact with anyone, your mind is not in this, it is thinking about studying, she is an adult because of her age [18+], but that does not mean that she is a woman.

It is generally understood and taken for granted in the bateyes that once a female becomes sexually active children will soon follow. As exemplified here, a female that is eighteen years or older may be an adult by law, and someone who is making responsible choices about her life, finances and family might be considered mature, but to receive the designation as a woman requires having had a sexual relationship. This distinction is important because being labeled a woman can become a double edge sword. If a female in the community is known to be a "woman" or have had sexual contact with boys/men, but she is not married, being labeled a woman can carry a stigma and represent a pejorative identity: una mujer de la calle (a woman of the streets) within the bateyes and Dominican society. Esmaralda, acknowledges that her daughter demonstrates the majority of qualities and skills that a mature, adult, women should possess, but according to Esmaralda's marianista worldview her daughter cannot receive/ and should not receive the designation as a woman until she has had sexual relations and children, ideally within marriage.

Six of the ten grandmothers interviewed discussed still adhering to this marianista view of womanhood, where the culmination to achieving an adult identity/becoming a woman occurs at the point of marriage, sex and ultimately motherhood. Raquel, a seventy year-old great-grandmother explained: “Atender sus hijos y su esposo, para mi... Para ser una mujer adulta necesita hijos, atender su esposo, mantener su casa y atenderse ellos.” Raquel: “To take care of your children and your husband, for me...to be an adult woman you need your children, you take care of your husband, your house and take care of them [children].”

While a majority of grandmothers see marriage and motherhood as *the* pathway to womanhood, only four of the eighteen primary caregivers articulated this same belief. Two primary caregivers with daughters who did not experience pregnancy before age nineteen, or at the time of interview, and two primary caregivers of adolescent mothers advocate this traditional/marianista pathway to womanhood. Ruth, a thirty-four year-old woman, whose teenage daughter had not experienced pregnancy at the time of interview explained:

Ruth: Para verse mujer tiene que tener sus hijos, dar hijos para sentirse mujer

IS: ¿Quién no tiene hijos aquí, una persona grande que no tenga hijos?

Ruth: María por ejemplo, no tiene hijos,

IS: ¿Ella es una mujer? ¿Porque ella es una mujer?

Ruth: Porque esta con su marido en su casa.

IS: ¿Pero ella no es una mujer como completa?

Ruth: No completa, porque no tiene hijos. No está completa, yo si estoy completa tengo cinco que me están.

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Ruth: To appear to be a woman you have to have your children, give birth to children to feel like a woman.

IS: Who doesn't have children here, an adult person who doesn't have children?

Ruth: Maria for example doesn't have children.

IS: Is she a woman? Why is she a woman?

Ruth: Because she has her husband and her household.

IS: But she isn't a complete woman?

Ruth: Not complete because she doesn't have children. She isn't complete, I am complete because I have my five children.

Even though Ruth represents a younger generation than grandmothers, she still believes that becoming a woman/taking on an adult identity in the community involves the combined traditionally proscriptive roles of wife and mother.

Adolescent mothers and adolescent females that have never experienced pregnancy also discussed a range of routes to womanhood. What is interesting is that only one adolescent mother described motherhood/marriage as a finite pathway to womanhood ( $n=9$ ), whereas four adolescent females who had never experienced pregnancy ( $n=10$ ) stated the belief that only through marriage and motherhood could a female take on the role of a mature, adult woman in the community. Females who had not experienced pregnancy at the time of interview ranged in age from sixteen to thirty-one and all had developed complex understandings of an adult identity that expands beyond the confines of age, sexual activity, marriage and motherhood

Marilyn, the sixteen year-old daughter of Alejandra who participated in my case study, articulates the many caveats that exist for females with the worldview that motherhood and marriage do not necessarily represent a singular pathway to womanhood, or an adult identity. In both our life history interview and on several separate occasions I spoke with Marilyn about pathways to womanhood/adult identity in the batey. Marilyn was clear in her general theoretical belief that a female could achieve an adult identity in the community that went beyond just marriage and motherhood. But for herself, Marilyn was also clear in her belief that she would only consider herself a mature, adult woman and that her mother would only see her in this light once she was married *and* eventually had children. For Marilyn, the critical piece to establishing a mature, adult identity



involved establishing a household outside of her mother's. Marilyn was practical in questioning whether she would be able to achieve a mature adult identity outside of marriage, since so few females in the batey manage to do so.

### **Marriage and Motherhood as Necessary but Insufficient to Become a Woman**

While only a minority of participants from any cohort discussed marriage and motherhood as the exclusive pathway to an adult identity, across all generations of females, an overwhelming majority see marriage and motherhood a part of the necessary achievements to develop an adult identity. Nine out of ten grandmothers discussed the importance of motherhood in the transition from being considered a girl to being considered a mature adult woman. In addition to the six grandmothers who discuss marriage, sex and motherhood as a singular route to an adult identity, three grandmothers discuss marriage and motherhood as one component of taking on the role of a mature, adult woman. Esperanza, a fifty-six year-old grandmother talked about how the responsibility of maintaining a household and caring for a husband and children in some respects helps females develop the maturity that is part of an adult identity:

Esperanza: Es que ellos no están pensando nada, no tiene nada de pensamiento, ellas están chiquitas salieron embarazadas y no pueden pensar más allá de ese hijo, con el tiempo van a madurar y madurar para ser mujeres, esas son niñas todavía... no sabe cómo lavar, planchar y cocinar. Hay muchas muchachas así ahora... si tú te levantabas a las 7 con tu mama, ahora tienes una responsabilidad con tu esposo, te tienes que levantar a las 6, si él va a trabajar hay que prepararle su desayuno y si tú tienes que cocinar a la 1 y la comida todavía no está, tú vas a tratar de cocinar a las 12 cuando llegue el esposo, para que coma, de ahí va cambiando el pensamiento.

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Esperanza: It's that they [adolescent girls] aren't thinking about anything, they don't have any knowledge [experience], they are young, end up pregnant and they don't think beyond their child. With time they mature, they mature and

become women, they [adolescent mothers] are still girls... they don't know how to wash, to iron, to cook. There are many girls like that now... if you woke up at seven with your mom, now you have a responsibility to your husband, you have to wake up at six, you have to work to prepare breakfast and you have to cook at one and the food is not ready, you have to try to cook at noon when your husband gets home so he can eat. That is when you start to change your thinking.

Esperanza links what it means to be a mature adult woman to the ability to learn and manage multiple challenges in running a batey household. What is interesting about her commentary and the commentary of other grandmothers and primary caregivers is that they discuss adolescent females and young women as lacking skills like being able to cook, clean, wash and iron, that almost every girl in the batey is taught from the age of seven on. It is also telling that Esperanza, like all grandmothers, discusses gaining experiences necessary to develop maturity and to be viewed as a mature, adult woman though the process of being a wife and a mother. Esperanza later discussed her view that adolescent females should delay these experiences, and by doing so the timing of taking on the role of a mature, adult woman in the batey in favor of pursuing “perceived” educational opportunities that can be almost near impossible to achieve in the bateyes because of structural barriers (see section on educational opportunities). Esperanza misattributes young motherhood as the barrier to achieving higher education and better work opportunities and therefore she perceives a benefit for young females to delay entering into adult roles and being seen as women within the community.

Three of the ten grandmothers interviewed endorse a modified view of pathways to womanhood that include motherhood and/or marriage, in addition to education and economic achievement. This view expands the definition of a mature adult woman beyond the domestic sphere and traditional marianista worldview. Marisol, a sixty-two year-old grandmother who was raising an eighteen year-old granddaughter who had

never experienced pregnancy, at the time of interview, explained her reasoning for expanding the traditional definition of womanhood to include educational and economic attainment.

Marisol: Bueno, lograr para su bienestar, después de su casa y su familia lograr para su bienestar. Hacerse de una profesión, o de dos profesiones o de lo que sea para bien y portarse con el hombre como una mujer decente...desarrollar su mente, usted va por ahí y hace un curso, si usted no lo hace unas lo hace de computadoras, que en mi tiempo no había eso, porque si en mi tiempo hubiera habido eso yo no fuera así, no, ni tuviera las unas gastadas de lavar y trabajar.

Marisol: Well, to achieve your wellbeing. After your house and your family to achieve your wellbeing. To learn a profession, or two professions for your own good and to behave with the man [husband] like a decent woman...develop your mind, go and take courses, if you don't do a course in manicures do one in computers. In my time this didn't exist because if in my time this existed I wouldn't be like I am today, my nails wouldn't be eaten away from washing and working.

For Marisol, the fact that technical courses, vocational training, and the university even exist as possibilities is reason enough not only to shift thinking about what milestones must be reached to be considered a mature, adult woman, but also provide a reason for why adolescent females and women in their early twenties should delay taking on the role of a woman and perceive value in delaying marriage and motherhood.

Ramona, a fifty-seven year-old grandmother, discussed how demonstrating maturity and financial independence from primary caregivers, in the absence of marriage and motherhood, can indicate a female has developed the skills and capacity to be considered a mature, adult woman. Nonetheless, Ramona described her niece as a “muchacha” a girl that acts like a mature, adult, woman. Ramona’s phrasing and words reveal that even though her niece embodies the very qualities that a mature adult woman should have, in the absence of a husband and child she is still a girl:

Ramona: Bueno, por ejemplo, yo tengo una sobrina de 25 años que no se ha casado, apenas ahora empezó con amores, bueno esa muchacha vive con su papa, él alquila una casa. Entonces ella vive en una habitación, ella se la paga a él alquilada, su mismo papa. Ella tiene su estufa, su lavadora, su nevera, su cama. Ella trabaja en la zona, ella hace todas las cosas de una persona que está casada... Ya ella está actuando como una madre, una adulta, ella trabaja, ella se mantiene, ella compra esto y compra aquellos. Ella limpia su casa, lava su ropa y todas esas cosas. Ella hace eso como si fuera un ama de casa, una mama.

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Ramona: For example, I have a niece who is 25 years-old that is not married. Recently, she started to have a boyfriend. Well this girl lives with her father. He rents a house. So she lives in a room, she pays him rent, her father. She has her stove, her washing machine, her refrigerator and her bed. She works in the zona [free trade zone]. She does all the same things a married person does. She already acts like a mother, an adult, she works, she maintains herself, she buys this and that. She cleans her house, washes her clothes and all these things. She does this like she was a homemaker, a mother.

Primary caregivers of adolescent females describe pattern similar to grandmothers regarding pathways to womanhood. Of the eighteen primary caregivers, ten discussed motherhood and/or marriage as necessary, but in and of itself insufficient to demonstrate the qualities of womanhood. Four primary caregivers discussed routes to womanhood completely independent of motherhood and marriage. Analyzing by group there is not notable difference in responses for primary caregivers of adolescent females who had not experienced pregnancy at the time of interview versus those of primary caregivers of females who had had a child before age nineteen. Bienvenida a forty-two year-old mother of both an eighteen year-old daughter who had never experienced pregnancy at the time of interview as well as a nineteen year-old daughter who had recently given birth at the time of interview further elaborates her belief that adolescent females today should intuitively be able to perceive the benefits of delaying marriage, motherhood, and an identity in the community as a mature, adult woman because of possible future benefits that delaying marriage and motherhood might yield.

Bienvenida: Bueno, un ejemplo, tu estas estudiando, lo que tú tienes que hacer es seguir estudiando si tú quieres llegar a algo, porque ahora mismo la situación no esta buena para dizque uno tiene a los pocos años un muchacho al hombro así, hay que fajar estudiando, aprender algo para tu llegar a lograr mejor. Si usted tiene una familia que paso trabajos con usted, usted debe decir ‘yo no voy a ser igual después que mi papa o mi mama están enfermos, yo no les puedo comprar una pastilla o una inyección, no consigo, porque paso mi tiempos malgastándolo’. Uno tiene que llegar a viejo y poder sostenerse, si tu ibas a durar tres años, tu duras seis meses o un ano, porque tú no tienes recursos, duran poco, si tienes hijos, lo hijos no lo pueden atender, entonces tú no tienes para tu sostenerte en estos tiempos que no podías trabajar.

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Bienvenida: Well, for example, you are studying, what you have to do is continue studying if you want to achieve something because right now the situation is not great to have a child on your shoulder after a few years. You have to work hard studying, learn something to achieve something better. If you have a family that worked hard for you, you should say “I am not going to be like everyone else and later when my mom and dad are sick I can’t buy their pills or injections [can’t afford them], I can’t get them, because I wasted my time.” You have to be able to support yourself in old age because you don’t have resources, they don’t last long, if you have children, your children can’t care for you, so you don’t have anything to support yourself when you can no longer work.

Bienvenida not only discussed her perception of the shifting requirements for a female to become a mature, adult woman, but also connected it to an increasing reality in the bateyes and I would argue in Dominican society more broadly. Traditional support systems (children taking care of parents and grandparents in old age) are beginning to erode as the economy becomes increasingly worse, creating a situation where parents can barely care for their children. Caring for elders, the traditional social security and retirement of the poor in the Dominican Republic and Haiti is less and less possible for the poorest of families. Bienvenida demonstrates her awareness of this when she discusses how her children should not depend on their children for support in old age. As a result, education and improving work prospects takes on a whole new level of

importance for older generations as they think about their children's and grandchildren's futures.

Historically in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the norm was for children to take in their parents in old age and provide both material and physical support for them during sickness and when they could no longer work. Today, there are multiple cases where this does not happen and older community members die alone or are tended to with the limited resources that non-family relations. For example, during my fieldwork there was an elderly man who was gravely ill and eventually did die. This man had no living family in the Dominican Republic that would take responsibility for him. Instead, a couple of women in the community took the responsibility of bathing this man, making sure he was hydrated and fed when he was well enough to consume solid foods. When there was money available these two women would rotate taking him to the doctors, which never resulted in a diagnosis or any relief for his pain. But for these two community members this man would have died completely alone and in squalid conditions. This is considered a misfortune within the bateyes and an outcome to be avoided at all possible costs. Bienvenida predicts, perhaps correctly so, that in the future young people will need to acquire resources to support themselves in old age, or they will be at risk of not having their basic needs cared for towards the end of life, which is considered the most miserable death.

Additionally, Bienvenida, brings up another common concern among primary caregivers and grandmothers about adolescent females capacity to elect a suitable partner. She described her frustration that her nineteen year-old daughter, an extremely bright and gifted student, chose to marry a man that had three children from a previous relationship.

Bienvenida, like most women in the bateyes, is practical about the fact that while you may marry for love, it is also important to choose a partner that is in the best financial position to collaborate in the support of a household. Because poverty is universal, marrying a man with children from a previous relationship is considered a poor choice, one that lacks strategic planning and future thinking.

Bienvenida: Porque si ella fuera madura no se hubiera metido ahí donde se metió. ¿Tú crees que ella está madura ahí con un hombre con 3 muchachos? Eso no está bien metido. Si ella hubiera escuchado cuando uno le estaba hablando, quizás ella todavía no hubiera tenido un hijo, porque ella estaba haciendo \*\*\*de papel para ir a enganchar por ahí [the university]. Entonces, si ella se quedaba trabajando ya hubiera juntado para su universidad y no para el hijo que tiene ahora, pero no, ella tenía que meterse con ese tipo para tener un hijo, después que tiene un hijo, mira, ella tiene dos días de trabajo, ella tiene que estar faltando para llevar al niño al hospital, de nada que te cancela. ¿Hay un futuro ahí?

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Bienvenida: Because if she was mature she wouldn't have gotten involved where she did. Do you think she is mature over there with a man with three children? That is not a good situation. If she had listened when people were talking maybe she still wouldn't have a child because she was arranging her papers to enroll there [the university]. So if she had continued to work she would have saved for the university and not for her child that she has now, but no, she had to involve herself with this man to have a child. After you have a child, look, she has two days working, she has to miss work to take the child to the hospital, for nothing they will fire her. Is there a future there?

Bienvenida saw her daughter's potential, which is great, but she did not understand the frustration and disillusionment her daughter experienced as she tried to find a pathway to enter a university without any guidance about how to do so, or how to pick a major (in the Dominican Republic you actually study a career at the bachelors level unlike the U.S.). Bienvenida's daughter also lacked financial assistance to make her educational goals possible. Bernicia, Bienvenida daughter, articulated this concern to me, but it was difficult for Bienvenida a woman who had never had the opportunity to study formally, to understand her daughter's experience. I think that this was especially true

because Bieinvenida had been so dogged over the years in pursuing literacy classes after working long and taxing days.

Alejandra, my case study discusses how she thinks females should delay entering womanhood via marriage and motherhood because the deteriorating economic conditions in the Dominican Republic today, combined with the increasing need for secondary and post-secondary education to gain even subsistence level employment creates a new economic and social landscape, different from when primary caregivers and grandmothers came of age.

Alejandra: Bueno hoy en día es más difícil que en el tiempo que yo empecé a ser mujer adulta, yo diría que una muchacha tiene que estudiar, tiene que hacer un curso para defenderse a sí misma. Que el día de mañana si tú vives con un hombre y ese hombre no te da resultado tú puedes vivir de ese curso que tu aprendiste y que las muchachas tienen que esperar a madurarse, terminar sus clases, madurarse primero, antes de empezar a decir me “voy a casar, voy a empezar a tener hijos” porque el atraso de una muchacha es cuando comienza a tener hijos.

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Alejandra: Well today it is more difficult than when I was began to become an adult woman. I would tell a girl that she has to study, you have to take a course to learn to defend [economically] yourself. If tomorrow you live with a man and that man does not give you results you can live off of the course [skills] you learned. And that girls need to wait to mature, finish their classes, mature first, before you start to say “I’m going to get married, I’m going to have children” because having children sets a girl back.

Alejandra understands that for poor women of the bateyes today having a marketable skill to support a family when a partner is out of work, or abandons his financial responsibilities to the family is increasingly important. Yet Alejandra struggled to recognize the many obstacles adolescent females encounter even when they strongly desire post-secondary training. Lola elaborated on the point of not being able to rely on a husband/romantic partner for financial support. This is congruent with both the historical reality that women of the bateyes and poor women more generally in Dominican and



Haitian culture have had to help financially support households even when a male partner lived in the household. Yet Lola's discussion that young females should strive to be financially autonomous from husbands represents a new narrative:

Lola: Bueno pensaba que me gustaría trabajar, tener lo mío, como pobre, porque somos todos pobres, pero me gusta trabajar, no estar dependiendo de nadie y si usted compra un comedor o hace una casa de block yo no tengo que estar pendiente a eso, tengo que estar pendiente de lo mío, trabajar para tener lo mío, no llenarme de lujos, eso no me gustaría, pero vivir tranquila...hallar la oportunidad de estudiar también, porque eso es importante. Porque si usted no tiene una carrera usted no es nadie, ¿usted entiende?

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Lola: Well I thought that I would like to work, have my own, as a poor person because we are poor, but I like to work, not to depend on anyone. And if you buy a dining table or build a concrete house I don't have to worry about this, I have to worry about mine, to work to have my own, not a bunch of luxuries, I don't like that. But to live peacefully...to find the opportunity to study as well because it is important. Because if you don't have a career you are nothing. Do you understand?

This idea that an adolescent, or woman "is nothing" without a career is very new in the cultural cannon of adult identity/womanhood in the bateyes. Sierra, a thirty-six year-old mother of an adolescent daughter sums up the intersection of education attainment, marriage and motherhood as an alternative pathway to developing an adult identity and becoming a woman. Studying is critical to securing a future from the perspective of primary caregivers, but ultimately the experiences and sacrifices that come with being a mother will result in developing an adult identity.

Sierra: Mentira, a veces uno cree que es una mujer madura porque sabe cuidar su casa, cocinar y planchar y a tender a su hijo, pero es mentira. Hay muchas cosas que uno no sabe. Los niños se enferman a uno y es por falta de experiencia y a veces uno por no estudiar, no tener experiencia porque a veces uno tiene que estudiar para aprender, para abrir la mente... Claro que no, no siendo madre puede ser madura, pero cuando eres madre tú tienes otra experiencia, no es lo mismo porque tú ya tienes otra mentalidad. Lo que estabas pensando para ti ahora es para tu niño.

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Sierra: Lies, sometimes you believe that someone is a mature woman because she knows how to take care of a house: cook and iron and take care of her child, but that is a lie. There are many [mothers] that don't know. Children get sick on you and for lack of experience and sometimes because you didn't study, you don't have experience because sometimes you have to study to learn, to open your mind...Of course, without being a mother you can be mature, but when you are a mother you have another experience, it is not the same because you have a different mindset. Whereas before you thought about yourself, now you think about your child.

### **Pathways to Womanhood Independent of Marriage and Motherhood**

Only a small minority of females across generations discuss possible routes to womanhood that are completely independent of motherhood and marriage. Only one grandmother (n=10) endorsed a belief that a female can achieve a role and identity as a mature and adult woman in the community without having a child. Belkis, a fifty-two year-old grandmother and community leader stated:

Belkis: Ya después que uno salió de las faldas de su ama y cortó el cordón umbilical que tenga hijos o no ya usted es una persona adulta responsable de usted misma. Usted puede tener 5 años de edad, pero si usted dejó su casa, cortó ese cordón umbilical, usted está haciendo su vida fuera de su mamá y su papá que esos son los únicos amparos que usted tiene desde que usted nació hasta la muerte, porque usted puede tener 80 años y para su mamá y su papá usted es todavía un niño porque ellos te cubren todo.

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Belkis: After you leave your mother's skirt tails and cut the umbilical cord it doesn't matter if you have children or not you are an adult person, responsible for yourself. You can be five years-old, but if you leave your house, cut the umbilical cord, you are making your life apart from your mother and father that are the only protection you have from the time you are born until your death, because you can be 80 years-old and for your mom and dad you are still a child because they take care of everything.

The ability to make decisions and care for oneself are considered critical characteristics of being an adult woman for some females in the bateyes. Non-adolescent females discuss developing an identity of an adult woman as a nuanced experience of developing

a complex set of qualities and skills that allows a female to survive and ensure the survival of her family within the harsh conditions of the batey and the structural and gender violence that exists within Dominican society for females of Haitian descent. A distinction exists in how a female can demonstrate the responsibility and maturity that women often times cite as the marker of an adult woman. For many this is still embodied through the cult of domesticity. Learning to maintain a household, care for the needs of a husband and children are often described as markers of demonstrating an adult identity, particularly for older generations. The fact that conversations about routes to womanhood are moving beyond the circumference of motherhood and marriage illustrates the dynamic process regarding social and gender norms taking place within Dominican society and the setting of the bateyes.

Regardless of which ideal route to womanhood generations of females in the bateyes proscribe to, the reality remains that even for those who complete high school, work opportunities remain the same. The only participants in my study that were not supporting themselves through domestic service, cooking and selling food in the batey, or working in the free trade zone were the participants who had small businesses like the hair salon, the adolescent female who sold gasoline to motor cycle taxis in the batey and the young woman who had a nail salon. While some of these business owning participants had completed their high school degrees, others had not, and all had established enterprises before school completion and in some cases after exiting school without a degree. For the females of the bateyes, the ideal of a good paying, white collar jobs is just that, an ideal that is practically out of reach for almost all females in the bateyes. Nonetheless, generations of females are increasingly viewing educational

attainment and financial prospects as a critical piece of the role of an adult woman and taking on an adult identity. This is a complicated reality because in settings like the bateyes where females experience violence, gender discrimination and poverty having an identity as a mature, adult woman remains one of the few positive roles for females. Attaching near impossible to accomplish milestones to becoming a mature, adult woman potentially strips adolescent females, struggling to find meaning, while navigating difficult life circumstances an important role.

## CHAPTER X: DISCUSSION

The reality of the bateyes for young females today is much different socially and economically than the world mothers of adolescent daughters and grandmothers grew up in. Declining economic opportunities have resulted in primary caregivers of children (mostly women) increasingly having to spend significant periods of time away from home in order to provide for families. Men—traditionally a significant source of financial support for families—spend greater amounts of time out of work and/or unable to find consistent employment. This shift in employment opportunities for men and women coincides with increasing costs of living and the decline of real wages. The fact that female breadwinners, in the bateyes, are largely undocumented leaves them vulnerable to greater financial exploitation, sexual harassment and assault and hazardous working conditions compared to documented poor Dominicans.

In this context, adolescent girls often find themselves taking on increasing household responsibilities with less parental guidance than their mothers and grandmothers had, but also in an environment filled with different opportunities (potentially positive and/or negative) than their elders. Bateyes Chiquito and Sonrisa are both much more connected to towns and larger cities by improved roads, increased public transportation and the expansion of town/city landscapes than they were even 15 years ago. Both bateyes now host a wide range of discos, bars, internet cafes and drug trafficking is acknowledged by most community members. The number of unsolicited accounts of violence against women and girls of the bateyes that emerged in life history interviews provides a barometer for estimating the safety risks that girls and women confront in their daily lives. Older generations describe the traditional values and norms for adolescent females, remaining in the family household and focusing on domestic functions, as both

protective against these new risks and also important to maintaining a females reputation and minimizing conflict with other inhabitants of the batey.

At the same time that older generations hold onto aspects of the marinaista worldview, they increasingly see educational opportunities as a pathway to greater financial security for younger generations of females. Grandmothers generally had minimal if any formal education and even the mothers of adolescent females overwhelmingly did not complete even their 8<sup>th</sup> grade equivalency. The fact that a high school degree is even possible gives older generations' great hope for the potential of younger generations to rise out of poverty and create more financially stable lives for themselves and for family members. When adolescent females fail to complete school, gain vocational training and secure better jobs, mothers and grandmothers blame a lack of drive, initiative and discipline on the part of young females to delay entering romantic relationships.

The failed realization of educational aspirations represents not just another mouth to feed (due to motherhood), but a lost opportunity for a more secure financial future for a female's family. People in the bateyes survive though tightly weaved support networks. When a member of a familial support network improves economically, the whole group benefits. This places an additional pressure on adolescent females when older generations discuss the importance of secondary and post-secondary educational opportunities. What older generations fail to fully acknowledge is that there are substantial structural barriers that make achieving secondary and post-secondary degrees formidable challenges, not to mention the social capital that is necessary to segway into a professional job in Dominican society once education is completed.

Even if a girl makes it through high school there are few models and supports to make it through any kind of post-secondary educational opportunity. If a female begins post-secondary

training, her limited economic status means that she will struggle to pay tuition fees, transportation costs as well as the costs of supplies and materials for studies. This is apart from pressures and responsibilities a female will have to provide financial assistance to family and anyone else who might fall within her close support network. This is in addition to the intense pressure and messages females receive daily throughout Dominican society endorsing and reinforcing the belief that the ideal role for a female is in the home, with a husband and children. This disconnect creates a context where older women blame younger generations for their failure to achieve what no one before them has. This message is reinforced by the international aid community in campaigns that emphasize delaying pregnancy and motherhood as a method of improving one's life opportunities.

Adolescent females, on the other hand, acknowledge that education is an important goal, if not a realistic one. In line with historical machista/marianista worldviews in Dominican society, today's female youth in bateyes Chiquito and Sonrisa overwhelmingly describe marriage and motherhood as a critical step in taking on an adult identity within Dominican and batey society. In contrast to elders, taking on professional roles, achieved through educational attainment, are emphasized less by adolescent females, regardless of whether they have experienced pregnancy. In line with life history theory, adolescent females seem to make decisions about which roles they can successfully achieve, early motherhood versus educational and professional attainment, and place emphasis on the importance of these roles in their definition of womanhood. Environmental cues reinforce early motherhood as both a wise reproductive choice and also a strategic pathway to an adult identity, or womanhood. Environmental cues in batey communities indicate high morbidity and mortality for both children and elders and the social fabric of Dominican life is grounded in the historic idea the

highest life achievement for a woman is rearing children. Narratives across all three generations of participants indicate that this value of motherhood and its relationship to womanhood has not fundamentally changed over time. What has shifted are views about best timing to enter marriage and motherhood and therefore an adult identity/womanhood. For older generations of women marriage and motherhood should be delayed until early twenties. Adolescent females are less likely to endorse this perspective. In this context, producing multiple offspring, starting in late adolescence, can be seen as an adaptive life strategy, rather than just poor decision making.

The implications of research findings go beyond challenging messages sent by the international aid community surrounding the best time and circumstances for females to procreate. They also speak to an adaptiveness and resilience that adolescent females and young women display in the bateyes by reframing and expanding pathways to taking on a mature adult role (e.g. womanhood) in the bateyes and Dominican society, in the face of entrenched structural, cultural and gender violence. Rather than accepting at face value the messages of the aid community and even elders, adolescent females carve out pathways for themselves based on lived practical realities, shifting expectations and goals when one pathway to womanhood becomes untenable or unrealistic. Rather than stigmatizing current responses to environmental and social realities of females of Haitian descent living in the Dominican Republic, an emphasis needs to be placed on shifting the structural barriers that make educational and vocational attainment so difficult for females in batey communities, This type of transformation is what will ultimately allow adolescent females to realistically perceive that they have more optimal life choices than becoming a wife and a mother during mid or late adolescence. Achieving this kind of change is no small feat. It means a fundamental shift in Dominican social values and attitudes that currently deny Dominicans of Haitian descent fundamental rights like citizenship, while



simultaneously refusing to acknowledge that discrimination and racism exists within Dominican institutions and societies. In the meantime, females of Haitian descent living in the bateyes will continue to contest and confront the subordinate social and economic conditions they live under, finding ways to take on meaningful roles, like womanhood/a mature adult, through pathways that are realistically available to them.

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